A STUDY OF MASTER YINSHUN'S HERMENEUTICS: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* DOCTRINE

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of Master Yinshun's hermeneutics. It focuses especially on his interpretation of the Buddhist concept known as the *tathāgatagarbha*, which refers to the idea that all sentient beings intrinsically possess the "womb of the Buddha." In some explanations of this teaching, the *tathāgatagarbha* is symbolic of the practitioner's potential for attaining enlightenment. In others, it functions as a synonym for the Ultimate and becomes the eternalistic substrate for all of existence. It is this latter view to which Yinshun takes exception, seeing it as antithetical to the doctrine of emptiness which espouses the notion that all things, including ideas, material objects, and living beings, lack a permanent and independent nature and thus cannot possess an unchanging, eternalistic form.

I focus particularly on Yinshun's text *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, for it serves as a concise statement of his interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* and its relationship to emptiness. In this text, Yinshun continually asserts the doctrine of emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and relegates the *tathāgatagarbha* to the category of expedient means. He does this by examining the development of the *tathāgatagarbha*, emphasizing particularly its evolution within pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna textual sources said to have had their genesis in India such as the *Āgamas*, the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. For Yinshun, to regard the *tathāgatagarbha* as the ultimate truth rather than as an expedient means can only result in misguided practice and confusion about how to attain enlightenment.

I conclude by asking a number of general questions about Yinshun's thought and its relationship to the early to mid-twentieth century intellectual milieu in China. I also inquire about how Yinshun's ideas have contributed to the development of contemporary Chinese Buddhist movements flourishing in Taiwan today.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines both the scholar-monk Yinshun's interpretation of the Buddhist concept known as the *tathāgatagarbha* (*rulaizang* 如來藏) and its relationship to the doctrine of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*; Chn. *kong* 空). It functions chiefly as an investigation of Yinshun's hermeneutics, underscoring what I contend is his doctrinal agenda: re-establishing the doctrine of emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and relegating the *tathāgatagarbha* theory to the category of expedient means. At least since the Tang dynasty in China, the *tathāgatagarbha* has occupied the position of definitive truth, with emptiness playing the role of expedient. Yinshun reverses this interpretation, justifying his view using the work of important Indian thinkers associated with the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism such as Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. For Yinshun, appropriately understanding the difference between ultimate truth and expedient means has important ramifications for practice. Erroneously viewing the *tathāgatagarbha* as definitive truth leads to misguided praxis and thus interferes with one's ability to attain enlightenment. Only when the doctrine of emptiness is espoused as the ultimate and the *tathāgatagarbha* is taught as an expedient means can practitioners be properly guided along the path to liberation.

In this study, I focus primarily on Yinshun's text *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha* (*Rulaizang zhi Yanjiu* 如來藏之研究), for it serves as a concise statement of his position on the *tathāgatagarbha* and its connection to emptiness. In the main body of the thesis,

Chapters Two through Five. I present Yinshun's discussion of the development of *tathāgatagarbha* thought beginning with his explanation of its similarities to concepts found in pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism and concluding with his examination of its treatment in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*baoxinglun* 寶性論). When explicating his views of the *tathāgatagarbha*, I not only present what Yinshun has said about its relationship to the doctrine of emptiness, but also consider how he has developed his interpretations. I discuss the way he uses Indian sources to justify his conclusions and examine how he explains the images and metaphors for the *tathāgatagarbha* found in the various *sūtras* and treatises. Furthermore, I consider Yinshun's philological investigation of texts, providing concrete examples of his techniques of textual analysis. However, I do not explore all of the subtleties of his opinions or critique, for example, his interpretations and analyses of specific *sūtras* and treatises. Such a task is well beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I emphasize those aspects of his discussion that elucidate his general views on the *tathāgatagarbha*. After reading Chapters Two through Five, which parallel Yinshun's Chapters Three through Six in *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, the reader will notice the redundancy of Yinshun's position: he repeatedly insists that the *tathāgatagarbha* is an expedient means and that emptiness is the definitive expression of Buddhist truth.

Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the doctrine of emptiness derives in part from the social, political, and religious circumstances of the early to mid-twentieth century. That is to say, Yinshun's thought, including his hermeneutics, is influenced by the intellectual milieu of this period and in turn has influenced and

continues to influence the evolution of Chinese Buddhism, especially its various contemporary manifestations in Taiwan.

China in the early to mid-twentieth century faced many challenges wrought by its interactions with European nations, the United States, and Japan. It not only had to confront the dissolution of its economic and political autonomy in the face of Western and Japanese imperialism, but also had to address the reasons for its inability to prevent these nations from encroaching on its sovereignty. The examination of these issues, not surprisingly, fell upon both secular and religious intellectuals of the period, men like Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1858-1927), Yan Fu 嚴富 (1853-1921), Hu Shi 胡適(1891-1962), Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無(1871-1943), and Taixu 太虛 (1889-1947). Rather than blame what they deemed as China's "backwardness" and "impotency" entirely on outside aggressors, these men instead focused their critique on traditional Chinese thought and institutions.[1] For secular thinkers such as Yan Fu and Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀(1879-1942), Confucianism was the focus of criticism because of its emphasis on filial piety or the "five relationships" which supports a kind of "cult of ritualized subordination" in both the family and the bureaucratic setting.[2] Progressive Buddhist intellectuals like Taixu concentrated their critique on traditional Chinese Buddhist interpretations of doctrine as well as early to mid-twentieth century Buddhist institutions such as the monastic educational system.

In both secular and religious contexts, analysis of indigenous Chinese thought and religion was influenced by "Western" philosophical ideologies, including social

Darwinism. Pragmatism. and modern science. Questions were asked not only about China's military. political. and social inadequacies. but also about the most effective ways to politically and economically empower the nation. Critical reason served as the gauge by which to judge the efficacy of ideas that would contribute to religious. social. political. and cultural reform.[3] Chinese intellectuals regarded such reforms as necessary for effecting China's modernization. which in turn would allow the nation to compete economically and technologically with Europe. the United States. and Japan.

One of the most influential Buddhist reformers who lived during this time was the monk Yinshun 印順.[4] He was born in 1906 in a small village in the Chinese mainland. Growing up at the end of the Qing dynasty. Yinshun received a traditional preliminary education in the school where his father worked. Being an avid learner. he spent much of his childhood studying and memorizing the primers to the *Four Books* (*sishu* 四書) as well as selections from the Classics. By the age of thirteen. he had completed the upper levels of his childhood education. His father thereafter sent him to study traditional Chinese medicine. Not finding medicine interesting. Yinshun rejected this vocation after three years and returned to his primary school to teach. He remained a teacher there for eight years. during which time he avidly read religious and philosophical texts including the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. various legends about the transcendents (*xian* 仙). and even the Old and New Testaments. However. as he grew into a young adult he preferred to read

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[1] Vera Schwarcz. *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1985). 2.
[2] Ibid.. 3.
[3] Ibid.. 4.

Buddhist texts. After his parents died, he decided at the age of twenty-five to become a monk. It is worth noting here that at this early age Yinshun had already concluded that the essential teachings of Buddhism were represented by the doctrines attributed to the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools.[5] After he read more of the Buddhist canon, he amended this idea, recognizing that there is much more to Buddhist doctrine than that espoused by these two schools.[6] Nevertheless, throughout his career he never rejected his belief that the Mādhyamika treatment of emptiness expresses the authoritative view of Buddhist truth.

Instead of taking the traditional path to Buddhist education, which included entering a monastery to learn the rituals necessary for serving the laity, Yinshun enrolled in one of the newly created progressive seminaries of Buddhist education established by Master Taixu. There he excelled as a student and soon became a teacher. Taking inspiration from Taixu, Yinshun actively participated in the revival of Chinese Buddhism. By the nineteenth century, Buddhism in China had become primarily associated with death, playing an important role in the performance of funeral rituals. For many, it had ceased functioning as a spiritually viable religion. Taixu and others sought to reinvigorate Buddhism, making it palatable to the modern world in both the mainland and overseas.[7] Yinshun likewise adopted this role, writing about how Buddhism can transform society as well as advocating new approaches to the study of

[4] The following biographical sketch is adapted from Whalen Lai's introduction to Yinshun, *The Way to Buddhahood: Instructions from a Modern Chinese Master*, translated by Dr. Wing H. Yeung, M.D. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1998), xv-xxii.
[5] See Yinshun, *Youxin Fahai Liushi Nian* (Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1985), 4-5.
[6] Ibid., 9.

Buddhist philosophy and doctrine. In his article, "The Position of Chinese Tripitaka in World Buddhism," he quotes Taixu saying, "It is our responsibility to...adapt Buddhism to the modem world so that it may fulfill its mission of leading and taking under its wings the miserable being of the present era [*sic*]."[8]

When the Communist party came into power, Yinshun relocated to Sichuan province where he remained for eight years. When China fell to the communists, he fled to Hong Kong. In 1952, he was invited to relocate in Taiwan and has remained there ever since.[9] Yinshun has written prolifically for both scholarly and popular audiences on many subjects including Chinese Buddhism, Indian Buddhism, and Chinese religion and mythology. He has demonstrated his erudition with treatises on *cittamatra* thought, *prajñāpāramitā* literature, and *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, to name just a few.

Moreover, Yinshun has contributed significantly to the development of contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, influencing a number of important trends that have governed Buddhist practice, study, and social activism in Taiwan. In the course of his career, he has emphasized and exemplified the necessity for careful scholarly analysis of texts and doctrines, stressing particularly the importance of understanding the development of ideas in certain times and places. In terms of praxis, Yinshun's *The Way to Becoming a Buddha* (*Chengfo zhi Dao* 成佛之道) has functioned among both lay and monastic Chinese practitioners as a type of manual for Buddhist practice and teachings.

[7] For a more detailed account of Taixu's activities see Holmes Welch's chapter entitled, "T'ai-hsu," found in Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 51-71.
[8] Yinshun, *A Translation of Works By Ven. Yin Shun*, translated by the Mahaprajna Buddhist Society (Singapore: The Mahaprajna Buddhist Society), 94.
[9] Charles Brewer Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State 1660-1990* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 126.

emphasizing the necessity of morality, meditation, and study in the pursuit of enlightenment.[10] Yinshun's concept of "Buddhism in the human realm" (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教) has contributed to the formation of socially engaged Buddhism in Taiwan.[11] Master Zhengyan 證嚴法師, one of Yinshun's tonsure disciples, and her charitable organization known as the Buddhist Association for the Merit of Overcoming Difficulties and Compassionate Relief (Fojiao Kenan Ciji Gongde Hui 佛教克難慈濟功德會) serve as important examples of this phenomenon.

An examination of Yinshun's thought will help to elucidate the development of Taiwanese Buddhism in the twentieth century as well as to explain the responses given by contemporary Buddhist thinkers and practitioners to important political, economic, and social issues facing the modern nation of Taiwan. Moreover, it will help to broaden our understanding of the relationship between Buddhism and the intellectual milieu characteristic of early to mid-twentieth century China. Much of the research regarding Chinese intellectuals of this period by American and European scholars focuses on an analysis of the reforms proffered by Confucian and secular thinkers and their treatment of "Western" political, social, and philosophical ideologies.[12] But for a few exceptions—Holmes Welch, Charles Jones, and Donald Pittman being among the most notable—the

[10] Yinshun, *Chengfo zhi Dao* 成佛之道, Miaoyun Ji 妙雲集, vol. 9 (Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1992).
[11] See Yinshun, *Fo zai Renjian* 佛在人間, Miaoyun Ji 妙雲集, vol. 14 (Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1992).
[12] For example, see the following texts: Hao Chang, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Search for Order and Meaning, 1890-1911* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987); Jerome Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Yu-sheng Lin, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); and Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964).

thought of twentieth century Buddhist intellectuals has largely been ignored.[13] The studies that do exist focus on institutional reforms such as those championed by Master Taixu rather than treating philosophical positions and doctrinal reform.[14] Looking carefully at Yinshun's work will allow us to draw conclusions about how at least one progressive Buddhist thinker explicated Buddhist doctrine and will provide insight into how political, cultural, and religious change distinctive of the period affected doctrinal interpretation in Buddhism generally.

Finally, just as we can discuss early to mid-twentieth century China's struggles to compete politically and economically with the West and Japan as a process of modernization, we can also speak of the "modernization" of Chinese Buddhism within this larger context. To do so, however, we must define "modernization" as it applies to religious traditions, and more specifically to Chinese Buddhism. In order to accomplish this task, we need to ascertain how social, cultural, and ideological factors affecting China and Chinese intellectuals have influenced the thought and practice of Chinese Buddhist thinkers. Investigating Yinshun's thought as well as that of other Buddhist intellectuals will provide useful data for our attempts to comprehend the nature of the relationship between Chinese Buddhism and the process of modernization.

Though little has been written in Western languages about twentieth century Chinese Buddhism and virtually no studies of Yinshun exist in these languages, much has been written about both subjects by scholars in Taiwan and the People's Republic of

[13] See Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) and *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism: 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). Also see Donald Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001) and Charles Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan.*

China.[15] The studies that specifically discuss Yinshun often provide useful summations of his doctrinal works or describe the development of those teachings that apply to religious praxis or social activism such as "Buddhism in the human realm,"[16] but very little has been written about the relationship between these two aspects of his thought. For example, is there a connection between the *tathāgatagarbha* and *renjian fojiao*? How, if at all, does Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* relate to his critique of Pure Land Buddhist teaching and practice? How does Yinshun's emphasis on the doctrine of emptiness influence his views regarding the reform of Chinese Buddhism? Though I raise these questions in the context of this thesis, full examination must wait for another time.

I focus on Yinshun's interpretations of the doctrine of emptiness and the *tathāgatagarbha* because I believe that they are the key to any investigation of Yinshun's thought, whether it is an analysis of his commentaries on Buddhist *sūtras*, his explanations of Buddhist practice, or his ideas on the reformation of Chinese Buddhism. Understanding Yinshun's hermeneutics is a necessary foundation for the future assessment of Yinshun's significance as an intellectual leader of contemporary Chinese

[14] Welch, *The Buddhist Revival*, 55-64.

[15] There is one dissertation about Yinshun in English written by Tien Po-yao. See Po-yao Tien, "A Modern Buddhist Monk-Reformer in China: The Life and Thought of Yin-shun" (Ph.D. diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 1995). For examples of these Chinese sources see Tianxiang Ma 麻天祥, *Wanqing foxue yu jindai shehui sichao* 晚清佛學與近代社會思潮 (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 1992), Canteng Jiang 燦騰江, *Taiwan Fojiao yu Xiandai Shehui* 臺灣佛教與現代社會(Taipei: Dongda Chubanshe, 1992), and Huinan Yang, *Dangdai Fojiao Sixiang Zhanwang* 當代佛教思想展望(Taipei: Dongda Tushu Gongsi, 1991).

[16] See, for example, Canteng Jiang 燦騰江, *Dangdai Taiwan Renjian Fojiao Sixiang Jia: Yi Yinshun Daoshi wei Zhongxin de Xinhuo Xiangzhuan Yanjiu Lunwenji* 當代臺灣人間佛教思想家：以印順導師爲中心的薪火相傳論文集(Taipei:Xinwenfeng, 2001), Jifu Lan 吉富藍, ed., *Yinshun Daoshi de Sixiang yu Xuewen* 印順導師的思想與學問(Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1988), Peng Guo 朋郭, *Yinshun Foxue Sixiang Yanjiu* 印顺佛学思想研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Foxue Chubanshe, 1993).

Buddhism. I see this study as a preliminary step in a larger project that will assess Yinshun's relationship to the "modernization" of Buddhism, the connection between Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* and his notion of "Buddhism in the Human Realm," and, finally, the issue of his influence on emerging movements of Buddhist social activism in Taiwan. In addition to an analysis of Yinshun's views of *tathāgatagarbha* and emptiness, a complete treatment of Yinshun's hermeneutics will require an extensive examination of his hermeneutical theory, which he refers to as "Using the Buddha Dharma to Study the Buddha Dharma" (*Yi fofa yanjiu fofa* 以佛法研究佛法).[17] Though I touch on this issue in the conclusion of this study, it deserves further attention.

I will now turn to a brief overview of the content found in each of the chapters of this thesis. In Chapter One, I place Yinshun's treatment of the relationship between *tathāgatagarbha* theory and the doctrine of emptiness in the context of the on-going debate between those who hold emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and those who insist *tathāgatagarbha* theory occupies that role. Yinshun's interpretation represents a modern Chinese response to this issue. The next four chapters present the basic arguments in Chapters Three through Six of Yinshun's *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. Corresponding specifically to Yinshun's Chapter Three, "The Development of the Doctrine of the Original Purity of the Mind," my Chapter Two presents Yinshun's discussion of the relationship between *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine and the concept known as the "Original

[17] See Yinshun, "Yi Fofa Yanjiu Fofa" in *Yi Fofa Yanjiu Fofa* 以佛法研究佛法, Miaoyun Ji 妙雲集, vol.

Purity of the Mind" found both in the pre-Mahāyāna texts and the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. Despite his opinion that *tathāgatagarbha* theory is a Mahāyāna development, Yinshun recognizes that the "Original Purity of the Mind" (*xinxing benjing* 心性本淨), a pre-Mahāyāna teaching, shares similarities with *tathāgatagarbha* thought and concludes that it, too, when properly understood, is an expedient means. In Chapter Three, which correlates with Yinshun's Chapter Four, "The Development and Completion of *Tathāgatagarbha* Doctrine," I discuss his examination of the role played by the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*, the *Huayan Sūtra*, and the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* in the development of *tathāgatagarbha* thought. Chapter Four, paralleling Yinshun's Chapter Five, "The Early Texts of the *Tathāgatagarbha* Doctrine," explicates Yinshun's treatment of seven important *tathāgatagarbha* texts which espouse the idea that all sentient beings originally possess the essential nature of the tathāgata. These texts include the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, *The Great Cloud Sūtra*, *The Great Dharma Drum Sūtra*, *The Aṅgulimālya Sūtra*, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā Sūtra*, and *The Sūtra of No Increase and No Decrease*. Chapter Five, which concentrates on Yinshun's Chapter Six, "The Main Trends Associated with the *Tathāgatagarbha* Teachings," treats Yinshun's investigation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga Treatise*, an important *tathāgatagarbha* text. In this chapter, I present Yinshun's discussion of the organization of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and his explanation of the important philosophical concepts that the text utilizes in its treatment of the *tathāgatagarbha*. The final chapter of this study summarizes Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* and its development.

16 (Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1992), 1-14.

indicating its relationship to his specific theory of hermeneutics known as "Using the Buddha Dharma to Study the Buddha Dharma." It raises questions about Yinshun's contribution to the "modernization" of Chinese Buddhism in the early to mid-twentieth century and the role that his thought has played and continues to play in the development of contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONTROVERSY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DOCTRINE OF EMPTINESS AND THE TATHĀGATAGARBHA

The doctrine of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*; Chn. *kong* 空) has always played a central role in Indian and Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. Its foremost proponent, Nāgārjuna (circa 150-250), regarded in both India and China as the founder of the Indian Mādhyamika School, gave this doctrine deft and full expression in what many believe is his most important work: the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*(hereafter referred to as the *Kārikā*). In this work, Nāgārjuna explicates emptiness in three distinct, yet related ways.

In the first distinction, he defines emptiness as the negation of *svabhāva* (self-nature). According to Nāgārjuna, individual entities do not possess a separate, independent existence—they are devoid of own-being. They have no permanent, unchanging nature because they exist only in dependence on other things, conditions, and circumstances which are themselves composite and constantly changing. Another designation for emptiness understood in this way is dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*).

Secondly, emptiness can be used to negate false views. In the *Kārikā*, Nāgārjuna refutes all concepts and conceptualization through his delineation of the "eight no's":

> (Therein, every event is "marked" by:) non-origination, non-extinction, non-destruction, non-permanence, non-identity, non-differentiation, non-coming (into being), non-going (out of being). [18]

He proffers these "eight negations" as the means for avoiding the two extreme views of "being" and "nothingness." The former describes entities or events as existing in an enduring, unchanging form whereas the latter indicates that they do not have any existence at all. Though they espouse contradictory perspectives, fundamental to both of these views is the notion of permanence. Holding the extreme view of "being" in relation to a "thing" (or event) indicates that we perceive that "thing" as possessing some kind of permanent existence. Similarly, utilizing the opposite extreme, "nothingness," to characterize an entity means that we understand that entity as permanently and definitely not existing. The doctrine of emptiness as explicated by Nāgārjuna confutes both views. Things/events exist, though causally, being dependent upon various conditions for their "origination." At the same time, things/events do not exist if by this we intend that they possess own-being or an enduring self-nature. Thus, in this way the false concepts of "being" and "nothingness" are refuted.[19]

Finally, the third distinction is the "emptiness of emptiness." Emptiness serves practical ends: it helps the practitioner sever attachments to entities and eliminate false views by establishing their lack of self-nature. However, once the adept has transcended his attachments to things, he must further relinquish even the concept of emptiness.[20] To remain attached to this doctrine can lead to a nihilist perception of reality, a dangerous

[18] Quote from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* taken from Yu-kwan Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 19.
[19] Ibid., 20.

view for the Buddhist because it undermines the necessity of the religious life. Therefore, one must realize that even the doctrine of emptiness is itself empty of any kind of permanent existence or stable referent.

Śūnyatā made a great impact on early Buddhist philosophical thinking in China. In the fourth century, for example, we see it taken up by literati and monks as a topic for "pure talk" (*qingtan* 清談) discussions.[21] Such thinkers as Zhi Mindu 支愍度, Zhidun 支遁, and Huiyuan 慧遠 (d. 433) interpreted the concept of emptiness as it appeared in translations of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature in terms of a contemporary trend of thought known as "dark learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學), which emphasized the relationship between "fundamental non-being" (*benwu* 本無) and "final being" (*moyou* 末有).[22] A more perfect understanding of Nāgārjuna's exposition of emptiness did not occur in China, however, until the beginning of the fifth century with the appearance of the great Kuchean translator, Kumārajīva (344-413 CE), who was a proponent of Mādhyamika thought. Among Kumārajīva's disciples were those like Sengzhao 僧肇 (b. 374 CE), who demonstrated in his various doctrinal expositions, namely *Prajñā Has No Knowing*, *Emptiness of the Non-Absolute*, and *Things Do Not Shift*, a complete understanding of the "orthodox" or Indian and Central Asian interpretations of emptiness and dependent origination.[23]

[20] Ibid., 25-27.
[21] E. Zurcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: the Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1972), 93-101.
[22] Ibid., 87.
[23] Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 154. One should note that Huiyuan's understanding of emptiness changed drastically after his correspondence with Kumārajīva. His views became more orthodox, though his thought continued to betray fundamental misconceptions about the existence and non-existence of things. See his "Restatement of Preface to the Abridged *Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise*," 110-112.

Despite the influence of the emptiness doctrine on the development of Buddhist philosophical speculation in China, in the late sixth and early seventh centuries we discover a fundamental shift in emphasis as evidenced by the appearance of uniquely Chinese schools of Buddhism—that is, schools which have creatively adapted Indian and Central Asian Buddhist ideas to a Chinese world view. Here, I am referring to both the Tiantai 天台 and Huayan 華嚴 traditions.

This shift is a move away from the negative dialectic of Nāgārjuna's *Kārikā*, wherein the focus is on deconstructing false views and proving that all things lack own-being, and a move toward the development of positive language for describing reality and attaining truth. Such thinkers as Tiantai's Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597 CE) and Huayan's Fazang 法藏 (643-712 CE) developed positive discourse for describing reality and attaining truth. Both men adapted, albeit in fundamentally different ways, the concept of the *tathāgatagarbha* (literally, "womb or embryo of the Tathāgata") as the basis for their philosophical exposition. *Tathāgatagarbha* (Chn. *rulaizang* 如來藏) doctrine has its origins in India with such *sūtras* as the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* and such treatises as the *Ratnagotravibhāga-mahāyānanottaratantra Śāstra*, a work that systematized this doctrine based on the early *tathāgatagarbha* scriptures. In its earliest uses, *tathāgatagarbha* signified the inherent capacity of sentient beings to attain Buddhahood. Later, it came to refer to an original pure essence intrinsic to all beings. This essence, otherwise known as Buddha Nature, becomes polluted by defilements. Enlightenment

occurs by eliminating these defilements and thereby uncovering the pure Buddha Nature.[24]

In China, with texts like the *Mahayana Awakening of Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論), the *tathāgatagarbha* theory takes on cosmological dimensions. The *tathāgatagarbha* functions as the substratum of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Thus, in its identification with the "One Mind," the *tathāgatagarbha* encompasses all facets of both the phenomenal and transcendental worlds.[25] The emphasis in China on the cosmological aspects of the theory resonates with indigenous Chinese religious and philosophical discourse, including, for example, Taoist ideas such as the "original pure essence" and Confucian concepts like the "innate goodness of man."[26] Thus, Paul Williams writes:

> Chinese civilization was thus predisposed to the acceptance of a teaching wherein the sage discovers within himself a Self which is also the real essence of the natural world, through learning to calm the mind, cut discursiveness, allowing it to rest in its own purity and goodness.[27]

[24] David S. Ruegg, *La Théorie Du Tathāgatagarbha Et Du Gotra: Études Sur La Sotériologie Et La Gnoséologie Du Bouddhisme* (Paris: École Française D'Extrême-Orient, 1969), 516.
[25] Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Doctrinal Foundations* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 110.
[26] Professor Charles Muller, in a discussion of the classical Chinese philosophical concepts *ti* (essence, substance) and *yong* (function), argues that the characterization of mind in the *Doctrine of the Mean* served as a means for the Chinese to understand Indian Buddhist teachings on the mind:

> [The] basic characterization found in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, where the single mind has two aspects, one unmanifest, and the other manifest, becomes the perfect archetype for the Chinese apprehension of Indian Buddhist teachings regarding a mind that is pure in its basic nature, but has the potential for impurity, or discordance, when it moves into activity.

Charles Muller, "Essence-function and Interpenetration: Early Chinese Origins and Manifestations," *Bulletin of Toyo Gakuen University* (1999): 6.
[27] Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 112.

Through the merging of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine with certain Chinese philosophical predispositions (a process that did not necessarily develop consciously), we find emerging in the sixth and seventh centuries an array of positive discourses for describing reality and truth—theories such as, for example, the Middle Way-Buddha Nature (*Zhongdao foxing* 中道佛性) and the "non-obstruction of principles and phenomena" (*lishi wuai* 理事無礙). In its more hypertrophic expressions such positive language perhaps led to the Japanese Buddhist theory of "original enlightenment" (*hongaku shiso* 本覺思想) which insisted on the inherent (uncultivated and uncultivatable) enlightenment of all things.

Tathāgatagarbha thought underwent a number of challenges between the sixth to the eighth centuries in China before it became fully accepted as a definitive articulation of Buddhist truth. One could argue that at this time some of the most important discussions regarding *tathāgatagarbha* thought took place within the context of Yogācāra Buddhism. The opponents of *tathāgatagarbha*, represented in the sixth century by men like Bodhiruci 菩提流支 (d. 527), advocated the "orthodox" interpretation of Yogācāra, regarding themselves as the inheritors of the Mādhyamika tradition's understanding of emptiness. These figures postulated a storehouse consciousness (the *ālaya-vijñāna*) that acts as a repository of karmic seeds or impressions generated by past actions. The seeds subsequently influence the engendering of new experiences. This consciousness, however, though fundamental to experience, is in a state of constant flux, continually re-producing itself each moment in response to constantly changing conditions. Thus, it does not have a permanent existence. It lacks or is empty of an independent, unchanging

self. Because the storehouse consciousness is the basis for continual rebirth in the realm of suffering, one has to eliminate it in order to attain enlightenment.

Proponents of the *tathāgatagarbha*, represented by Ratnamati 勒那摩提 (fl. 508), combined together the concepts of the *ālaya-vijñāna* and the *tathāgatagarbha*, arguing that enlightenment consisted in purifying the *ālaya-vijñāna* rather than eliminating it. Thus, as with the *tathāgatagarbha*, one attains enlightenment by removing the defilements from the storehouse consciousness in order to uncover its pure and original nature, much like one would remove dust from a mirror, thereby exposing its clean, reflective surface.

Thus, moving into the later sixth and seventh centuries, one can ascertain two major doctrinal trends within Chinese Buddhist thought:

> The substantialistic nondual metaphysic whose eternalistic ground was variously labeled Buddha Nature, mind, tathāgatagarbha, Dharma-dhātu, and Suchness (Skt. tathatā; Ch. rulai). On the other side was an anti-substantialistic critique that eschewed any form of metaphysical reification, emphasizing emptiness as the absence of permanent selfhood or independent essence in anything.[28]

Yet by the eighth century, Buddha Nature theory became the normative expression of Buddhist truth and the philosophical foundation of Buddhist doctrine and practice in East Asia. Mādhyamika philosophy, along with its fundamental teachings about emptiness and dependent origination, was subsumed under, and thereby reinterpreted by means of, *tathāgatagarbha* thought. The fifth Huayan patriarch

[28] Dan Lusthaus, "Chinese Philosophy," In Yogacara Buddhism Research Association: Essays and Articles on Yogacara Buddhism [Website]. Established January 2000 [cited 28 November 2001]. Available from http://www.human.toyogakuen-u.ac.jp/~acmuller/yogacara/articles/chbud-uni.htm.

Zongmi宗密 (780-841 CE) following the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, for instance, perceived *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as the definitive teaching of Buddhism. Because it did not emphasize the positive qualities of the Tathāgata and instead utilized negative language to refer to the absolute, he considered the doctrine of emptiness presented in the *Perfection of Wisdom* scriptures to be only provisional and therefore incomplete. For him, the *tathāgatagarbha* (a synonym for the absolute) described in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* as both empty of defilements and full of Buddha Dharmas, proffered a more perfect and complete expression of truth.

The positive language in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, which refers to the absolute, is exemplified by two sets of four qualities that characterize the *tathāgatagarbha*. The first set describes it as eternal (*chang* 常), everlasting (*heng* 恒), quiescent (*qingliang* 清涼), and constant (*bubian* 不變). The *Ratnagotravibhāga* defines these characteristics in the following manner:

> It is not born, nor does it die;
> It does not suffer [from illness], nor is it decrepit,
> Because it is eternal,
> Everlasting, quiescent and constant.
> Being eternal, it is not born
> Even with [the form of] the Body made of mind,
> Being everlasting, it does not die
> Even with the Inconceivable Transformation,
> Being quiescent, it has no suffering
> From the illness of subtle defiling forces,
> And, being constant, it does not become decrepit
> By the accumulation of the Passionless Active Force.[29]

[29] Jikido Takasaki, *A Study of the Ratnagaotravibhāga (Uttaratantra): Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Roma: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1966), 256-257.

Thus, the essence of the Buddha (i.e. the *tathāgatagarbha*) is not born because it is eternal, does not die because it is everlasting, does not suffer because it is quiescent, and does not age because it is constant.

The second set is perhaps the most noteworthy. The *Śrīmālā Sūtra* states:

> ...When sentient beings have faith in the Tathāgata and those sentient beings conceive [him] with permanence, pleasure, self, and purity, they do not go astray. Those sentient beings have the right view. Why so? Because the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata has the perfection of permanence, the perfection of pleasure, the perfection of self, the perfection of purity. Whatever sentient beings see the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata that way, see correctly. Whoever see correctly are called the sons of the Lord born from his heart, born from his mouth, born from the Dharma, who behave as manifestation of Dharma and as heirs of Dharma.[30]

The characteristics of permanence (*chang* 常), pleasure (*le* 樂), self (*wo* 我) and purity (*jing* 淨) appear in pre-Mahayana literature. As such, they form the basis of the "four inverted views" (*si diendao* 四顛倒) which constitute ignorance. According to this teaching, sentient beings suffer because they crave after impermanent things as if they were permanent, things that cause suffering as if they bring happiness, things that lack own-being as if they had a self, and defiled things as if they were pure. However, *tathāgatagarbha* literature inverts these views when attributing them to the absolute. Conditioned things are indeed characterized by impermanence, suffering, no-self, and

[30] Alex Wayman and Hideko Wayman, *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā: A Buddhist Scripture on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 102.

impurity. But the *tathāgatagarbha*, being unconditioned, represents the perfection of permanence, pleasure, self, and purity.[31]

From the above, we can see that the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition advocates the kataphatic characterization of emptiness as a corrective to the apophatic dialectic of the Mādhyamika critique. The Chinese tradition represented by men like Zongmi adopted this perspective and consciously espoused the *tathāgatagarbha* as the highest expression of truth, purposely subordinating the Mādhyamika view of emptiness to it. Hence, at least since the Tang dynasty, the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition in its various forms (e.g. Buddha Nature theory) has remained the orthodox interpretation of Buddhist truth until the twentieth century.

However, during this time *tathāgatagarbha* thought did face challenges in, for example, the controversy between the Shanjia 山家 and Shanwai 山外 factions of Song Tiantai as well as in the debates that took place in Japan in the ninth century between Saicho and Tokuitsu.[32] Similar challenges are today being made by scholars in Japan in a controversial movement known as "Critical Buddhism" (*hihan bukkyo* 批判佛教), championed by the highly respected Buddhologists, Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō. These scholars argue that *tathāgatagarbha* thought advocates the existence of an objectively and substantively real fundament—variously termed *dharmadhātu*, *dharmakāya*, *tathāgatagarbha*, or Buddha Nature—which generates the plurality of

[31] The above discussion of the qualities associated with the *tathāgatagarbha* is adapted from Peter N. Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 218-223.
[32] Paul L. Swanson, "Why They Say Zen Is Not Buddhism: Recent Japanese Critiques of Buddha-Nature," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: the Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 3.

experience. Matsumoto refers to this fundament as the "locus" and the various phenomena of experience as the "super-loci" or dharmas. In addition to having real existence, the "locus" is further described as a singular reality (as opposed to a bifurcated one), functioning as the essential nature of all the dharmas. Matsumoto states that religious traditions which posit a basic substrate from which arise all the particulars of conventional reality operate according to his "theory of locus." Both Matsumoto and Hakamaya regard such traditions as espousing tenets fundamentally opposed to the Buddha's teachings of no-self and dependent origination, specifically delineated as the twelve-fold chain of dependent arising (and therefore not to be confused with the Huayan notion of universal mutual co-arising). [33] These religious and philosophical systems, they insist, teach that the fundament actually and permanently exists.[34] The scholars that form the "Critical Buddhism" movement regard the true Buddhist teachings to be those that Śākyamuni Buddha actually taught, though the Mādhyamika presentation of emptiness is acceptable as well. They insist that such concepts as the *tathāgatagarbha* constitute the object of the Buddha's criticism and therefore should be rejected.[35]

Little known (at least outside of Taiwan), however, is that the questions central to this indigenous Japanese movement were anticipated decades earlier by the thought and ideas of the eminent Buddhist scholar monk, Master Yinshun who, unlike the proponents of "Critical Buddhism," has managed to raise similar issues about *tathāgatagarbha* theory without entirely abandoning it.

[33] Ibid., 7.
[34] The preceding discussion is based on Shirō Matsumoto, "The Doctrine of *Tathāgata-garbha* is not Buddhist," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: the Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 165-173. See especially 167-172.

Much like Hakamaya and Matsumoto, Yinshun has taken a critical stance toward the *tathāgatagarbha* and Buddha Nature teachings in his scholarly writings. He has found inspiration for such critiques from his in-depth studies of Indian Buddhism, being particularly influenced by Mādhyamika philosophy and the doctrine of emptiness, as it is interpreted by Candrakīrti.

In his subtle yet significant critique of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, Yinshun does not attempt to reject this theory. In fact, in his presentation of the doctrine he follows standard explanations found in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, *Laṇkāvatāra Sūtra*, and the *Dasheng qi xin lun* (*Mahayana Awakening of Faith*) advocated by such traditional Chinese Buddhist schools as Huayan, Tiantai, and Chan. Commenting on a passage in the *Laṇkāvatāra Sūtra* which discusses the undefiled nature of the *tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun writes:

> Therefore, Tathagatagarbha (*sic*) can be explained as that which contains all the Tathagata's virtues and which, more important, is mainly covered by defiled things. Thus, when dissociated from the covering afflictions, Tathagatagarbha is also called the Dharma body.[36]

Yinshun's descriptions of the *tathāgatagarbha* demonstrate an understanding of the doctrine similar to that of such traditional Buddhist thinkers as Zongmi.

However, Yinshun advocates the Mādhyamika teaching of the "fundamental emptiness of all things" as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth: "It (Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*) certifies dependent origination, emptiness, and the Middle Path

[35] Ibid., 172-173.

as the basic and profound meaning of the Buddhist teachings... It takes the orthodox view of the Buddha Dharma and establishes it as the foundation for dependent origination and the Middle Way."[37] *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine for Yinshun, is merely provisional—an expedient device (Skt. *upāya*; Chn. *fangbian* 方便). According to the doctrine of expediency, the Buddha determined what he taught his disciples based on their relative level of spiritual maturity and their capacity to understand his teachings. Only the most exceptional practitioners could comprehend Truth in its fullest expression. Since the vast majority could not, the Buddha instead taught them provisional truths, which would guide their practice until their mental and spiritual capacities developed sufficiently to understand the ultimate Truth of his message.

Yinshun contends that the Buddha, realizing its practical efficacy, taught that the *tathāgatagarbha* resides in all sentient beings in order to ease their fear and concerns about emptiness and encourage them to practice the Buddhist path.[38] In this way, *tathāgatagarbha* theory is an expedient device used to correct a specific problem encountered by certain types of practitioners. For many, the doctrine of emptiness can be a daunting view of reality—so much so that some people become paralyzed with fear or discouragement, believing that they lack the capacity to attain enlightenment. The *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine provides hope for these people because it allows that everyone has the potential for achieving Buddhahood. The *tathāgatagarbha* functions, then, as a means to an end. It helps the adherent to gain insight into the ultimate truth of emptiness.

[36] Yinshun, *Way to Buddhahood*, 317.
[37] Yinshun and Xu Mingji 續明記, *Zhongguan Jin lun* 中觀今論, Miaoyun Ji 妙雲集, vol. 9 (Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1992), 24.
[38] Yinshun, *Way to Buddhahood*, 324-325.

From this we can see that Yinshun's position on *tathāgatagarbha* theory differs from traditional Chinese interpretations. Instead of subordinating *śūnyatā* to the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching (as, for example, did Zongmi), Yinshun does the opposite and interprets *tathāgatagarbha* theory in terms of the emptiness critique.

When discussing the *tathāgatagarbha* as an expedient device, Yinshun presents it as undefiled and immutable, characterizing it as permanent, steadfast, calm, and eternal. Yet when explicating the doctrine in terms of ultimate truth, he indicates that emptiness is its fundamental nature. In the discussion of Yogācāra doctrine found in his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun contends that the *tathāgatagarbha*, when comprehended from the perspective of the ultimate, is really nothing more than a synonym for emptiness.[39]

To further refine our understanding of Yinshun's position, here, we can examine the distinction he makes between absolute Buddha Nature (*li foxing*, 理佛性) and developmental/functional Buddha Nature (*xing foxing*, 行佛性). Absolute Buddha Nature refers to the teaching that all sentient beings are inherently Buddhas or that they intrinsically possess the essence of the Buddhas. It is that aspect of Buddha Nature which is often described as permanent and eternal, corresponding with the views of the *tathāgatagarbha* espoused in the *Awakening of Faith*, *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. However, when it is appropriately and ultimately understood, Yinshun, following the interpretation established by the Mādhyamika school, defines absolute Buddha Nature as emptiness: "Absolute Buddha nature means that all things are

[39] Yinshun, *Rulaizang zhi Yanjiu* 如來藏之研究 (Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1992), 192.

fundamentally without an independent nature of their own; that is, their fundamental nature is empty and still."[40]

Absolute Buddha Nature, however, is not the "profound" meaning (*shenyi*, 深義) of Buddha Nature—that meaning instead belongs to what Yinshun calls the developmental/functional Buddha Nature. This aspect of Buddha Nature refers to the potential for becoming a Buddha. It is the cause and condition for attaining Buddhahood that comes from relying on the teachings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as well as from determined practice and study of those teachings. Based on the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* 十地經 and the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra* 大集經, Yinshun divides the developmental Buddha Nature into two stages: the primary seed nature stage (*xing zhongxing wei*, 性種性位) and the functioning seed nature stage (*xi zhongxing wei*, 習種性位). In the first, one vows, based on seeing the Buddha and hearing the Dharma, to attain enlightenment and to possess the Buddha Nature of the Great Vehicle. Once this vow has arisen it cannot be lost and therefore forms the cause and condition for engendering Buddhahood. It becomes the Buddha Nature—also referred to as the "bodhi-mind seed" (*putixin zhong*, 菩提心種)—upon which the practitioner relies for gradually cultivating "bodhi." Gradual practice causes this "seed Buddha Nature" to grow. Yinshun writes,

> When one has the bodhi-mind seed, one relies on this Buddha nature to practice gradually. The virtue and pure function of the Great Vehicle (the Mahayana) that are incessantly practiced with increasing superiority are called the functioning seed nature. After much practicing, one brings forth faultless and pure virtues.[41]

[40] Yinshun, *Way to Buddhahood*, 214.
[41] Ibid., 216.

Thus, in the primary seed nature stage, the Buddha Nature is implanted in the sentient being and then is subsequently cultivated in the functioning seed nature stage.

Now, we can ascertain the difference between absolute Buddha Nature and functional/developmental Buddha Nature. Functional Buddha Nature as the potential for attaining enlightenment is formed both from one's encounter with the teachings of the Buddha and one's resolve to attain Buddhahood. Since the potential for attaining enlightenment arises dependent on such external causes and conditions, it operates according to the principle of emptiness. That is, like any other "thing" or dharma, Buddha Nature cannot come into existence of itself, independently. Moreover, even though once it has arisen it cannot be lost, one still must cultivate it through practice in order for Buddhahood to result. Thus, not only does it dependently originate, but it also changes in relation to praxis: "Gradual practice causes the pure function of the Buddha-seed to grow from the bottom grade to the middle and then to the top."[42] In good Mādhyamika fashion, then, emptiness, dependent origination, and impermanence explain the emergence and cultivation of Buddha Nature as well as the consequent achievement of Buddhahood.

Absolute Buddha Nature, on the other hand, is said to inherently exist within sentient beings. It does not come from exterior sources and therefore is not dependently originated. As long as the practitioner ultimately realizes that it is a synonym for emptiness and that it otherwise functions as an expedient pedagogical device, then Yinshun can accept it and the language used to describe it (e.g. permanence, purity, and

[42]Ibid.

selfhood) as a legitimate teaching of the Buddha. However, one errs if he hypostatizes the Buddha Nature/*tathāgatagarbha*, ascribing to it an independent existence much in the way that the concept of *ātman* is understood in the context of the *Upaniṣads*. Yinshun's concern regarding the interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* championed by Zongmi is not that it commits the aforementioned error outright, but that it can easily lead to such a mistaken view—a fact attested to, in Yinshun's opinion, by early twentieth-century Pure Land interpretations of Amitābha Buddha and the Western Paradise.

Here I will note that Yinshun's understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha* not only differs from that of Zongmi and the Chinese Buddhist tradition since the Tang dynasty, but also from that of Hakamaya and Matsumoto, who seem, at least at first glance, to be Yinshun's ideological counterparts in Japan. While Yinshun agrees that the emphasis on Buddha Nature theory as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth has serious problems and adamantly opposes any attempt to construe Buddha Nature as the ontological ground of phenomena, he is unwilling to regard *tathāgatagarbha* thought as a heterodox teaching. Rather from the above we see that he only wishes to assert what he considers to be the appropriate interpretation of the doctrine, thereby focusing on its soteriological significance as a way for liberating beings incapable of understanding the doctrine of emptiness as taught in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* and Mādhyamika treatises.

We have seen that Yinshun wishes to establish the doctrine of emptiness as the authoritative expression of ultimate truth and interpret *tathāgatagarbha* teachings in terms of *śūnyatā*. Periodically, in both Indian and Chinese Buddhist contexts, the tension between *tathāgatagarbha* thought and the doctrine of emptiness has surfaced. This

tension arises from the attempts to reconcile the doctrine of emptiness, which argues that no permanent, independent entity exists, with the characterizations of the *tathāgatagarbha* as possessing an eternal, unchanging Self. Yinshun's critique of the Chinese emphasis on Buddha Nature serves as another case whereby this tension becomes manifest. Yinshun strongly espouses emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth. He defines the *tathāgatagarbha* and all of the interpretations which suggest that it has a permanent, unchanging nature as expedient devices—non-definitive truths requiring further explanation that ultimately have the doctrine of emptiness as their basis. In the discussion of *tathāgatagarbha* thought found in his monumental study *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun painstakingly demonstrates in both the process and result of his analysis that emptiness is the philosophical and doctrinal foundation of the *tathāgatagarbha* teachings—the truth to which they ultimately point.

CHAPTER 2

YINSHUN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND" AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* DOCTRINE

Chapter One of this thesis placed Yinshun's interpretations of the *tathāgatagarbha* and emptiness within the larger context of the on-going debate between those who champion emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and those who view the *tathāgatagarbha* as playing this role. In this chapter, I turn attention specifically to Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* found in his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha.*

When formulating an interpretation of a doctrine important in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Yinshun often traces its development from antecedents in Indian sources, beginning with pre-Mahāyāna sources whenever possible. His treatment of the *tathāgatagarbha* is no exception. Therefore, in Chapter Three of his text, Yinshun begins his discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha* with an investigation of the concept known as the "Original Purity of the Mind" (Skt. *citta-prakṛtiviśuddhi*; Chn. *xinxing benjing* 心性本淨), a concept that has its roots in the *sūtra* and *śāstra* literature of both pre-Mahāyāna (what Yinshun calls Śrāvaka Buddhism) and early Mahāyāna Buddhism. He divides this chapter into two sections: "The Pure Mind Teaching of the Śrāvaka *Sūtras* and *Śāstras*" (*shengwen jinglun de xinjing shuo* 聲聞經論的心淨說) and "The Original Purity of the

Mind Is Nature Teaching of the Early Mahāyāna" (*chuqi dasheng de xinxing benjing* 初期大乘的心性本淨).

In order to demonstrate the way Yinshun utilizes pre-Mahāyāna concepts in a discussion of the evolution of a Mahāyāna doctrine, I focus on Yinshun's examination of the relationship between the "Original Purity of the Mind"(*xinxing benjing* 心性本淨) and *samādhi* cultivation, the role played by *xinxing benjing* in the Pāli canon and the doctrines of the sectarian schools of early Buddhism, the use of metaphors as explanations for the purity of the mind, and the tendency among the early sects of Buddhism to regard the mind as a single unity. In my elucidation of the second section, I will examine Yinshun's investigation of the relationship between *xinxing benjing* and the early Mahāyāna concepts of "no-mind" (*feixin* 非心), the *bodhisattva* mind (*pusaxin* 菩薩心), and "the mind of enlightenment" (Skt. *bodhicitta*; Chn. *putixin* 菩提心).

2.1. "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND" IN PRE- MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

Yinshun prefaces his discussion of the "Original Purity of the Mind" by indicating that *tathāgatagarbha* theory was not in the beginning directly linked to *xinxing benjing*. However, as the theory evolved, there developed the idea that sentient beings contain a pure *tathāgatagarbha*. Because this notion is very similar in meaning to the "Original Purity of the Mind" theory found in pre- Mahāyāna and early Mahāyāna sources, the relationship between the two concepts, Yinshun points out, became an important focus of *tathāgatagarbha* thought. Therefore, he suggests that an investigation of the similarities between these two theories will elucidate the development of some of the key components of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine.

Succinctly put, according to Yinshun, the "Original Purity of the Mind" theory states that the "mind is fundamentally pure; [but] is defiled by adventitious dust" (*xinxing benjing, kechen suo ran* 心性本淨, 客塵所染). The use of the compound, *kechen* (Skt. *āgantuka*) in the second phrase of the quote specifically indicates that the defilements come from outside of the mind. That is to say, the mind, being inherently pure, does not in essence contain afflictions or obstructions. The ideograph *ke*, which generally translates as "guest," in this compound conveys the idea that the defilements merely "visit" the mind, staying only as long as the mind remains uncultivated.

2.1.1. THE "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND" AND THE CULTIVATION OF *SAMĀDHI*

In order to explain how this doctrine arose, Yinshun discusses the relationship between "the Original Purity of the Mind" and the practice of deep meditative concentration or *samādhi* (*ding* 定). He contends that the concept of "the Original Purity of the Mind" derives from the cultivation of *samādhi* in the context of the Four Absorptions (*sichan*, 四禪) practice delineated in the Pāli *sūtras* and commentaries.

To cultivate the Four Absorptions, one must begin by recognizing that the "five coverings" or hindrances (*wugai*, 五蓋)—desire (*tanyu* 貪欲), anger (*chenwei* 瞋恚), dullness (*hang* 沆) agitation (*diaohui* 掉悔), and doubt (*yi* 疑)—obstruct the mind, making it unable to attain stillness and purity. The practitioner attains the first absorption and the consequent five factors only after these afflictions (*fannao* 煩惱) have been removed. The arising of each of the five factors is a result of the elimination of a specific hindrance. Thus, the ability to apply the mind or thought to the object of concentration (*xin* 尋)—the first factor—results from the eradication of dullness; sustained mental application on one object (*si* 伺) results from the eradication of doubt; zest (*pīti*) results from the eradication of anger; pleasurable, reposed feelings (*le* 樂) result from the eradication of agitation; and one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*) results from the eradication of sensual desire. From the emphasis in this process on the importance of applying the mind to the object of concentration and developing one-pointedness of mind, one can see the significant function that *samādhi* serves in the attainment of the

first absorption. However, it is the second through the fourth absorptions that are intimately associated with *samādhi*, for they specifically arise from its cultivation.

To enter the second absorption, the meditator dispenses with *xin* and *si* while maintaining zest, happiness, and one-pointed concentration, resulting in tranquillity and the exaltation of mind. In the third absorption, zest is eliminated while sustaining happiness and concentration—a state of mind wherein equanimity and mindfulness abound. For the adept, "this is the most blissful state of happiness, exceedingly sweet; for it is free from even the slightest disturbance."[43] Finally, one must even forego this blissful happiness while sustaining one-pointed concentration in order to attain the fourth absorption and the six supernatural powers usually attributed to Buddhas (*liu tong zizai* 六通自在).[44]

Samādhi in the context of these absorptions allows the practitioner to fix the mind and thoughts on one object without wavering, thereby controlling sense disturbances and eliminating mental distractions. However, in so doing, he does not establish a passive state of mind, but rather an active one that must engender the virtues of morality and compassion in addition to concentration. *Samādhi*, then, is not only the process whereby

[43] Paravahera Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice: a General Exposition According to the Pāli Canon of the Theravāda School* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena & Co., LTD, 1962), 40.
[44] Same as *liu shentong* 六神通. The six supernatural powers include: (1) unimpeded bodily action (*shenjing tong* 神境通); (2) The power of divine vision (*tianyan tong* 天眼通), wherein one can observe the full course of passage by sentient beings through the six destinies; (3) the power of divine hearing (*tianye tong* 天耳通), with which one is able to hear all the words of suffering and joy experienced by living beings in the six destinies; (4) the power of awareness of the minds of others (*taxin tong* 他心通), whereby one knows the thoughts of all the beings who pass through the six destinies; (5) the power of the knowledge of previous lifetimes (*shuming tong* 宿命通), whereby one knows the events of countless *kalpas* of previous lifetimes experienced by him/herself, as well as all the beings in the six destinies; (6) the power of the extinction of contamination (*loujin tong* 漏盡通) whereby one completely extinguishes all the afflictions of the three realms, and thus is no longer subject to rebirth in the three realms. Charles Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism" [dictionary on-line]. Established on 15 July 1995 [cited 11 November 2001]. Available from http://www.acmuller.net/ddb/index.html; INTERNET.

one develops one-pointed concentration, but also the means by which the meditator eliminates mental impurities:

> In its function or essence, therefore, it is a power which destroys all tendency to wavering and the habit of pursuing fantastic ideas which either attract with pleasantness or...prove distracting. Thus, Samādhi may be considered as an active faculty, or Indriya, of mind in that it controls emotional impulses and excitement...Furthermore, Samādhi cleanses the mind by eliminating all mental defilements; so that, like a polished mirror that gives a clear reflection, the mind radiates its own inner light to see, and to realize things "as they are."[45]

Yinshun quotes the *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經), which uses the "refining gold metaphor (*lianjin de biyu* 鍊金的比喻)," to explain this process. In its natural form as ore, gold is mixed with many impurities. However, through the refinement process, the impurities are progressively removed until all that is left is pure, unadulterated gold. Likewise the mind's purity becomes manifest through the cultivation of deep meditative concentration. Yinshun carries the metaphor further by indicating that the process of refining gold includes specific steps that correspond to particular characteristics in the development of *samādhi*. For example, the methods of adding fire, sprinkling water, and not adding fire nor sprinkling water correspond to the practices of "stopping thought" (*siweizhi* 思惟止), "initiating thought" (*siweiju* 思惟舉), and "relinquishing thought" (*siweishe* 思惟捨) respectively. Other popular metaphors used in the *Āgamas* to demonstrate the process whereby the inherent purity of the mind is revealed include making dirty water clean, washing the head, body, and clothes, and grinding a mirror. Based on this discussion of *samādhi*, Yinshun argues that the doctrine of the "Original Purity of the Mind" was

formulated based on experiences encountered in practice. Through the cultivation of *samādhi* within the Four Absorptions method of meditation, the practitioner discovers that the mind is in essence pure.

2.1.2. CANONICAL SOURCES FOR THE "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND" DOCTRINE

In the preceding section, we examined Yinshun's discussion of the connection between *samādhi* cultivation and the realization of the essential purity of the mind. In this section, we will focus on his presentation of the canonical evidence for the inherent purity of the mind found in the *Āgamas*, specifically the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 增支部. Yinshun quotes this text:

> Monks! This mind is the most luminous purity (Skt. *pabhassara*; Chn. *ji guangjing* 極光淨), and it is defiled by external defilements. The uninformed, ordinary person doesn't actually understand it like that, so for this reason, I say the uninformed, ordinary person does not cultivate the mind.
>
> Monks! This mind is the most luminous purity, and it is liberated from external defilements. The well-informed, noble disciple actually understands it like that, so for this reason, I say the well-informed, noble disciple cultivates the mind. [46]

[45] Vajirañāṇa, *Buddhist Meditation*, 45. The preceding discussion on the Four Absorptions and *samādhi* is adapted from *Buddhist Meditation*, 39-45. For more details, consult the chapter in this book entitled, "Jhāna and Samādhi."

[46] Translation mine. Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 69. The translation from the Pāli reads:

> Luminous, monks, is the mind. And it is defiled by incoming defilements. The uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn't discern that as it actually is present, which is why I tell you that -- for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person -- there is no development of the mind.

In this text. "most luminous purity" refers to the inherent purity of the mind. Thus. those who understand that the mind is in essence luminous and pure realize that the afflictions arise from sources external to the mind

Among the schools collectively called "sectarian Buddhism" (*bupai fojiao*. 部派佛教), both the Mahāsaṃghikạ 大衆部 and the Vibhajyavādinṣ 分別說部 inherited and further developed the concept of the "Original Purity of the Mind." The Mahāsaṃghika sect emphasized a purity of the mind that remained unaffected not only by the afflictions. but also by the more wholesome characteristics which play important roles in the context of Buddhist praxis. Yinshun. explaining the Mahāsaṃghika position. writes:

> The latent conditions (*suimian*隨眠)[47] associated with the three wholesome roots (*san shangen* 三善根)[48] and the three unwholesome roots (*san bushangen* 三不善根)[49] are the same: they do not accord with the mind...The mind is not [the same as] either the wholesome or the unwholesome mental functions (*xin suofa* 心所法). However. the unwholesome latent conditions as well as the unwholesome mental functions can be eliminated. Therefore. the mind is compatible with the wholesome roots (and the wholesome mental functions). and is called the "the Original Purity of the Mind."[50]

Luminous. monks. is the mind. And it is freed from incoming defilements. The well-instructed noble disciple discerns that as it actually is present. which is why I tell you that -- for the well-instructed noble disciple -- there is development of the mind.

Thanissaro Bhikku. "Pabhassara Suttas," in *Anguttara Nikāya*. I. 51-52 [translation online]. 17 May 2001 [cited 11 November 2001]. Available from http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/anguttara/#1; INTERNET.

[47] Sanskrit: *anuśaya*. In both the Sarvāstivāda school and Yogācāra theory. the term usually applies to the afflictions or defilements. Here Yinshun uses it to refer to any adventitious tendency. good or bad.

[48] The three wholesome roots are giving, compassion. and wisdom.

[49] The three unwholesome roots include desire. anger. and ignorance. They are the same as the "three poisons" (*sandu* 三毒).

[50] Yinshun. *Rulaizang*. 70.

The mind, then, is devoid of all characteristics and conditions—good or evil, wholesome or unwholesome. However, for the Mahāsaṃghika, the "three wholesome roots" are of a quality different from that of their opposites. Though no more or less adventitious, giving, compassion, and wisdom are characteristics conducive to the path unto liberation while desire, anger, and ignorance are hindrances to it and must be rooted out. Thus, the "three wholesome roots" and the "Original Purity of the Mind," though in essence distinct, correspond in terms of praxis.[51]

Further explicating the meaning of the "Original Purity of the Mind," Yinshun turns to a discussion of the views held by the Vibhajyavādin, Mahīśāsaka (*ru hua di bu* 如化地部), and the Sarvāstivādin (*yiqie youbu* 一切有部) *śāstra* masters. These three schools are known collectively as "those who discuss distinctions" (*fenbie lunzhe* 分別論者). The Vibhajyavādin and Mahīśāsaka scholars recognize that before the afflictions are eliminated, the "essential purity of the mind" appears stained. However, they point out that this perception is mistaken. In reality, though the mind contains "polluted" characteristics (*ranwu xiang* 染污相), its essential, pure nature does not change. Summarizing these scholars' view, Yinshun writes:

> The polluted mind (*ranwuxin* 染污心) and the unpolluted mind (*buranwuxin* 不染污心) are not two different kinds of mind, but are the one mind (*yixin* 一心,) the essence of which is without difference (*qiti wuyi* 其體無異). The only difference corresponds to whether or not the afflictions are cut off.[52]

[51] We should note here that Yinshun does not address how the "three wholesome roots" can be no more or less adventitious than the "three unwholesome roots. One would expect that they have more significant existence than their counterparts if they result in liberation rather than ignorance.
[52] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 70-71.

Any contamination existent in the mind results from "adventitious defilements" (*kechen fannao* 客塵煩惱). Thus, with "those who discuss differences," we again encounter the idea that the defilements by nature derive from sources external to the mind--that is, they are not inherent to it. Though the afflictions superficially stain the mind, concealing its inherent purity, they do not in any way affect its fundamentally pure nature.

2.1.3. YINSHUN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND": THE SARVĀSTIVĀDIN POSITION

The Sarvāstivādin *śāstra* masters represent the dissenting voice among the *fenbie lunzhe*, not having the concept of the "Original Purity of the Mind" in their canonical literature. In fact, they actively oppose the concept, arguing that it is not a definitive teaching of the Buddha. Yinshun agrees with this characterization and justifies his position by means of an elaborate discussion of the categorization of the four *Āgamas* according to the "four points of view" (Skt. *siddhāntas*; Chn. *si xitan* 四悉檀).[53] The categorization runs as follows:

[53]Generally speaking, the "four *siddhāntas*" (or "points of view") are the four modes utilized by the Buddha for preaching the dharma to all sentient beings. Yinshun, here indicates, more specifically, that the "four *siddhāntas*" functioned as an ancient system for categorizing the four *Āgamas* according to their special characteristics. The "four points of view" include:

(1) The worldly point of view (*shijiexitan* 世界悉檀)—those teachings that accord with a conventional understanding of the world.

(2) The individual point of view (*gegeweirenxitan* 各各爲人悉檀)—those teachings that accord with the abilities and levels of understanding of the individual people listening.

(3) The therapeutic point of view (*duizhixitan* 對治悉檀)—those teachings aimed at eliminating strong defilements or evil karma of certain beings.

(4) The ultimate point of view (*diyiyixitan* 第一義悉檀)—those teachings about reality as understood by the Buddha himself.

Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 11November 2001.

1. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (長阿含經) is placed in the category called "auspicious pleasure" (*jixiang yueyi* 吉祥悅意) associated with the worldly point of view.

2. *The Middle Discourses of the Buddha* (中阿含經) is placed in the category called "destroying slackness" (破斥猶豫) associated with the therapeutic point of view.

3. The *Zengyi Ahan jing* (增壹阿含經), also known as the *Aṇguttara Nikāya*, is placed in the category called "fulfilling desire" (*manzu xiqiu* 滿足希求) associated with the individual point of view.

4. *Miscellaneous Discourses of the Buddha* (雜阿含經) is placed in the category called "praise the true meaning" (*xianyang zhenyi* 顯揚悉檀) associated with the ultimate point of view.

According to Yinshun, the "Original Purity of the Mind" as well as the metaphors used to explain it (such as the "refinement of gold" metaphor) are found in the *Aṇguttara Nikāya*. As we can see from the four *siddhānta* system above, this *Nikāya* falls within the third category, the "individual" *siddhānta*. This category includes those teachings of the Buddha that are tailored to the specific needs of the individual listeners, taking into consideration their intellectual and spiritual abilities and understanding. Such teachings do not reveal the ultimate truth about reality directly, but rather indirectly. They are designed for those who do not have the capacity to comprehend truth in its fullest extent. Yinshun also notes that this third "point of view" has been called the "people

Note: Yinshun also mentions that Buddhagoṣa 覺音 and Nāgārjuna 龍樹 use similar systems. Ibid., 72-73.

engendering goodness" *siddhānta* (*renshan xitan*, 人善悉檀) which indicates that it contains texts and teachings that specifically encourage sentient beings to cultivate morality, a necessary practice for the attainment of enlightenment.

Within the context of a particular Buddhist philosophical system, scriptural teachings that do not reveal truth in its totality are labeled as non-definitive (Skt. *neyārtha*; Chn. *feiliaoyi* 非了義) and in need of further interpretation beyond their literal surface meaning. For a statement to be regarded as non-definitive in a specific doctrinal scheme, one must demonstrate that another teaching recognized as the final and definitive (Skt. *nītārtha*; Chn. *liaoyi* 了義) expression of truth ultimately cancels it. The *nītārtha/neyārtha* distinction, then, is a Buddhist hermeneutical device—an interpretive strategy used to distinguish those teachings that express truth fully and completely and those that require additional explanation.[54] Of course, particular schools of thought manipulated this device in order to advance their own interpretation of truth and denigrate those of other schools. Yinshun indeed recognizes this fact.[55] Thus, though Yinshun agrees with the Sarvāstivādin view of the non-definitive nature of the "original purity of mind" teaching, he does not solely rely on the Sarvāstivādin interpretation to argue his perspective. Instead, he utilizes the Four *Siddhāntas* method of categorization, outlined above, to support his position. He contends that because the texts in which appear discussions of the "Original Purity of the Mind" and its various metaphors are

[54] See Ruegg's discussion of *nītārtha* and *neyārtha* in David Seyfort Ruegg, *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989), 30-31.
[55] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 72. In the concluding chapter of this thesis I will argue that Yinshun uses this hermeneutical devices to advance his own doctrinal agenda.

placed within the third *siddhānta*, they cannot be regarded as definitive expressions of Buddhist truth. If they had the status of definitive truth, they would be found in texts associated with the fourth *siddhānta*, "the ultimate point of view." In this way, Yinshun concludes that the theory of "the Original Purity of the Mind" is a non-definitive teaching and, as such, an expedient device.

We should note here that Yinshun's categorization of the *Āgamas* according to the "four points of view" is an arbitrary distinction that he makes without support from canonical sources. In his *Collection of the Holy Texts of Original Buddhism* (*yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng*), Yinshun attempts to justify his use of the *siddhāntas* by returning to the work of earlier Buddhist thinkers, in particular, Buddhaghosa's four-part classification of the *Āgamas* and Nāgārjuna's use of the "four points of view." Yinshun combines these two systems, noting their similarities. The categorization described above reflects this synthesis. However, no precedence in Buddhist literature before Yinshun exists for connecting the two systems. Thus, it is entirely based on his own understanding of them that he categorizes the *Āgamas* according to the "four points of view."[56]

Referencing the *Chengshilun* 成實論, Yinshun clarifies the circumstances in which *xinxing benjing* functions as an expedient device. In so doing, he distinguishes two types of people:

[56] Yinshun, *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng* 原始佛教聖典之集成 (Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1991), 488-491.

> [1] Some people believe that the mind permanently abides (*changzai* 常在). However, in early Buddhism (原始佛教), such a view was considered foolish heterodoxy. To correct this view it was said that the mind can become impure. If the mind can become impure then it cannot be permanent. [2] Some people believed that the mind foundationally was impure. Therefore they were heedlessly negligent, unable to resolutely make up their minds to practice. To inspire the good mind of these negligent people, they were therefore told that the mind is originally pure. It is that which the afflictions defile [only] temporarily, so why not work hard to make the pure mind arise![57]

In other words, some people believe that the mind exists permanently as an unchanging entity. To root out this erroneous view, the Buddha taught that the mind accumulates defilements. To say that the mind can become impure suggests that it changes and therefore does not have a permanent existence.

Though Yinshun does not address the validity of this argument, we should briefly note that this line of reasoning, at least the way Yinshun presents it here, does not satisfactorily demonstrate the impermanence of the mind, especially in light of the fact that we have already encountered the argument that the defilements have only an adventitious existence in relation to the pure mind—that is, they do not fundamentally pollute it in any way. One could argue—and in fact, as we have seen, many have—that the inherent nature of the mind remains unchanged despite the defilements, much like the fundamental nature of a mirror does not change even though dust accumulates on its surface. In any case, this argument requires further explication, and the place to begin is with the clarification of the relationship between the defilements and the mind. Yinshun,

[57] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 73-74. Yinshun notes that the *Chengshi lun* does not agree with the notion of the "Original Purity of the Mind," but it does advocate the teaching as a means to address specific problems that hinder the ability of certain sentient beings to practice Buddhism.

like the *Chengshilun*, uses this argument here, however, as a counter distinction to the second type of person: the one who holds that the mind is in essence impure. According to the *Chengshilun* (and Yinshun) the Buddha teaches *xinxing benjing* to correct the view that the mind is essentially impure.

The danger with the view that the mind is impure is that it undermines religious practice. Those who hold it, the *Chengshilun* suggests, believe that despite the amount of effort expended on practice, the mind will forever remain polluted, making religious praxis seem futile. This attitude encourages a nihilistic outlook on life in which one disregards all religious and moral injunctions, and instead engages only in self-serving pursuits. In order to deter this attitude and persuade those beings who advocate it to embark on the Buddhist path, the Buddha teaches that the impurities in the mind are merely adventitious, covering a mind that is in essence pure. Thus, *xinxing benjing* is taught as inspiration for right practice.

2.1.4. THE ROLE OF METAPHORS IN THE EXPLICATION OF THE "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND"

Early Buddhism relied on metaphor to explicate the process of uncovering the pure mind. As mentioned previously, a number of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist sects utilized the metaphors of "washing clothes," "grinding mirrors," and "smelting gold" to indicate the manner in which the mind's obstructions and afflictions can be eliminated, thereby

manifesting its purity.[58] Such sects regard these metaphors as legitimate expressions of the "Original Purity of the Mind" because of a principle known as the "capacity of metaphor" (Skt. *upamāna-pramāṇa*; Chn. *piyuliang* 譬喻量). According to Yinshun, the ancient orthodox sects considered metaphors as having doctrinal and philosophical authority to establish "correct principles (Skt. *nyāya*, Chn. 正理)." Though later the idea was nullified in favor of more logical argumentation, nonetheless, in the ancient period it was the method used to demonstrate what was and was not orthodox teaching.

Yinshun recognizes that metaphors can effectively communicate Buddhist teachings for they accord with conventional understanding—that is, they address difficult concepts by comparing them with things and situations to which people can easily relate. By doing so, metaphors aid in universalizing the Buddha-dharma: "The metaphors for establishing the 'Original Purity of the Mind' are common. They accord with the natural reactions of human beings under certain circumstances (*changqing*, 常情). Within the process of universalizing the Dharma (*fofa pujihua de guocheng* 佛法普及化的過程), this makes it easy for people to accept them..."[59] Thus, metaphors are efficacious for encouraging Buddhist practice because they appeal to the common knowledge held by

[58] According to Yinshun, this method of using metaphor anticipates the literary style of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (如來藏經) and the first part of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (大般涅槃經). For example, in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, an important metaphor for the *tathāgatagarbha* covered by afflictions is the image of the gold trinket covered by waste:

> Or, good sons, it is like genuine gold that has fallen into a pit of waste and been submerged and not seen for years. The pure gold does not decay, yet no one knows that it is there. But suppose there came along someone with supernatural vision, who told people, "Within the impure waste there is a genuine gold trinket. You should get it out and do with it as you please." Similarly, good sons, the impure waste is your innumerable kleśas (*sic*). The genuine gold trinket is your tathāgatagarbha (*sic*). William Grosnick, "The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra," in *Buddhism in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 98.

sentient beings which operates within the context of conventional reality.[60] Here, Yinshun reiterates a point he implied in his discussion of the categorization of the *Āgamas*. He referred to the "four points of view" to show how texts that contain references to and metaphors for *xinxing benjing* are categorized as non-definitive teachings and so are not representative of ultimate truth. Yinshun, making use of the two truths theory (*erdi* 二諦)—that of the conventional truth and the ultimate truth—claims that the metaphors for the "Original Purity of the Mind" operate only within the context of the mundane.[61]

Those who espouse the "Original Purity of the Mind" use these metaphors as a method to prove this doctrine, not as a means to symbolize it. Yinshun writes, "From beginning to end, the theory of the "Original Purity of the Mind" takes common knowledge (*changshi* 常識) metaphors as its proof."[62] If these metaphors were representations of the "Original Purity of the Mind," then one could assert that, at the conventional level of truth, they function symbolically as expressions of the ultimate truth of *xinxing benjing*. In this way, the metaphors and the doctrine would represent two distinct levels of truth—the provisional and the ultimate respectively. That the early schools of Buddhism utilized them as proof of *xinxing benjing*, however, suggests that both the metaphors and what they prove operate on the same level of truth. Since

[59] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 75.
[60] In his discussion of metaphors and their function, Yinshun does not address why some views that appeal to common knowledge (and thus, the metaphors associated with them) are more effective than others for encouraging practice.
[61] Of course, the two truths are really two aspects of one truth. However, Yinshun here wants to emphasize the difference between them, stressing that the metaphors as well as the teaching that they represent are part of conventional truth. For this reason, I have presented the two truths, in this discussion, as two separate truths.
[62] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 75.

Yinshun has already argued above that the metaphors are expedient devices. operating at the level of conventional reality. he. likewise. claims that the doctrine of the "Original purity of the Mind" functions as conventional truth.

Yinshun takes such care to delineate what is conventional and what is ultimate in order to prevent practitioners from mistaking the expedient device for the supreme truth. He likens the situation to the difference between commonsense and scientific theory. Commonsense is valuable in that it can generally help one to function properly in ordinary. everyday situations. However. it does not necessarily correspond to the scientific principles underlying the way things really are. In fact. it can sometimes contradict them. leading to inappropriate or ineffective action. such as bleeding a sick person with leeches to cure disease. Similarly. conventional truths. or expedient means. can be helpful for problems that interfere with spiritual development. but they can become a hindrance when they take the place of definitive truth. Yinshun writes:

> They (the commonsense metaphors) are easy for people to understand [literally. "get along with"]. but they certainly are not thorough (*shenche* 深徹). Therefore, the Abhidharma *śāstra* masters repeatedly say 'the conventional dharma is different. the sagely dharma is different' (*shisufa yi. xianshengfa yi* 世俗法異， 賢聖法異).[63]

2.1.5. UNITY OF THE MIND

Yinshun concludes his discussion of the "Original Purity of the Mind" in pre-Mahayana thought and texts by addressing the tendency among early Buddhist sects to view the mind as a single unity. To exemplify this tendency. he investigates the positions

of those who follow the Abidharma, those who advocate the one mind, and those who espouse the "Original Purity of the Mind."

To explicate the Abidharma position, Yinshun focuses on its theory of the "mind king" (*xinwang* 心王). According to this theory, a person's mind has numerous functions, such as affect, volition, and perception. The Abidharma texts distinguish each of these functions, one from the other, calling them collectively "the mental functions" (*xinsuoyoufa* 心所有法). The "mind king," on the other hand, is the overall cognitive function of one's consciousness. It serves as the basis of the mental functions. For the Abidharma thinkers, the mind and the mental functions are the same though they distinguish the "general characteristic of consciousness," which is the mind, from the "various specific characteristics of consciousness," which are the mental characteristics. Thus, for the Abidharma, the "mind king" (also known as the sixth consciousness)[64] represents the underlying unity of consciousness.

Yinshun only briefly describes the position of the "one mind" scholars, who hold that though the six consciousnesses are different from each other, they are merely dissimilar aspects of the "one mind" (*yixin* 一心). For them, then, it would seem that the "one mind" constitutes the underlying unity of consciousness.

Finally, Yinshun presents the *xinxing benjing* scholars' opinion regarding the "unity of the various aspects of mind." Yinshun describes their position in the following manner: "The mind is the one mind which exists within, whether it has become polluted

[63] Ibid.

[64] *Liushi* 六識. The six consciousnesses are the function of the six organs (liugen 六根—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin, and mind) in the apprehension of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and symbols attained in the

or has been separated from pollutants, the essence of the mind is pure." These scholars believe that the inherently pure mind, representing an underlying unity of mind, remains in essence pure despite the influence of good or evil mental functions.

From the above three examples, we see that the pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist world, differences in interpretations of the mind notwithstanding, consistently leaned toward a belief in the existence of an internal, unified mind. Yinshun argues that this view of the mind corresponds to that of the common person. He writes:

> The views of the average person are generally this way: they speak of continuous life and death. They think that one existence passes through the various lifetimes. If not, they say that one cannot pass from a previous life to the next life. They then talk about moving from being defiled to being pure, from being bound to being liberated. They think that there must be an existence that passes from impurity to purity, from being bound to being liberated. This is the view of the mundane world—it establishes the one mind or the origin of the discriminatory consciousness of the self.[65]

Because of their affinity with the mundane view of the mind held by most sentient beings, the concepts of the unified mind and pure mind served as useful devices for encouraging Buddhist practice. By establishing a common perception of the mind, Buddhist sects could easily communicate methods for correcting erroneous ideas or eliminating afflictions. Similar views of the mind facilitated the average sentient being's ability to understand these methods. Thus, Yinshun validates *xinxing benjing* and *zhongzhong tongyi* as expedient means useful for aiding sentient beings in their pursuit of enlightenment: "Using conventional metaphors and establishing the Original Purity of the

acts of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 11 November 2001.

[65] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 78.

Mind certainly fits the common knowledge of the [mundane] world, and abounds in the purpose for opening up people's minds to goodness."[66] However, we must remember that while Yinshun validates these conceptions of the mind as expedient means, he has all along criticized them when they are held as expressions of definitive truth.

Herein lies Yinshun's position regarding the "Original Purity of the Mind" espoused by pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism: it is a non-definitive teaching—an expedient device only—not an expression of ultimate truth.

[66] Ibid.

2.2. "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND" IN EARLY MAHĀYĀNA

In the second section of Chapter Three in his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun treats the topic of the *xinxing benjing* found in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Here, he begins by briefly reiterating the contexts in which the concept of the "Original Purity of the Mind" developed, mentioning its genesis in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, its elaboration and promulgation by the Mahāsaṃghika and the Vibhajyavādiṇ, and its treatment in early Mahāyāna Buddhism. In this section, he focuses his attention on the last of these three, discussing primarily the interpretation of the "Original Purity of the Mind" found in the *Prajñāparamitā* literature. In pointing out that the Mahāyāna has a different interpretation of this concept, he clearly indicates his support for the *Prajñāparamitā* position:

> The Mahāyāna which emphasizes wisdom (*zhonghui de dasheng* 重慧的大乘) offers a different explanation [of this concept]—one which derives from the perspective of the essential enlightenment of wisdom (*banruo tiwu* 般若體悟). Before the Common Era, this concept was already discussed, having been examined and approved as part of original wisdom (*yuanshi bore* 原始般若).[67]

Yinshun here sets the Mahāyāna interpretation of *xinxing benjing* apart from that of both Nikāya and Sectarian Buddhism by arguing that the *Prajñāparamitā* view derives from nothing less than the wisdom that produces enlightenment.[68] This view, then, not only signifies the correct and most definitive understanding of the concept, but also fully

[67] Ibid., 80.

[68] Wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*) in the context of the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* arises from the profound realization of dependent origination, no-self, and emptiness—the principle doctrines of early Mahāyāna. It has the function of extinguishing afflictions and bringing about enlightenment.

reflects ultimate truth whereas for pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism, we have seen Yinshun arguing that *xinxing benjing* functions as an expedient means. Implied here, of course, is that the latter view is inferior to the former as an expression of definitive truth. By associating the highest form of wisdom, namely "the wisdom that engenders enlightenment," with the Mahāyāna's "Original Purity of the Mind," Yinshun clearly reveals his preference for the *Prajñāparamitā* interpretation.

2.2.1. NO-MIND AND THE "ORIGINAL PURITY OF THE MIND"

To further explicate this interpretation, Yinshun commences with a discussion of the phrase, "this mind is no mind" (*shixin feixin*, 是心非心) which he quotes from the *Xiaopin Bore Boluomijing* 小品般若波羅蜜經. He argues that "no-mind" negates the notion, espoused by sectarian Buddhism, that the continuous mind (*xiangxuxin* 相續心) and the mind which corresponds to the obstructions (*fannao xiangying de xin* 煩惱相應的心) is originally pure. Such a negation is necessary to obfuscate the erroneous view that the purity of the mind is some kind of ontological absolute possessing permanent, independent existence. By failing ultimately to realize its expedient use and non-definitive character, the practitioner runs the risk of reifying the pure mind and thereby becoming attached to it as an expression of the ultimate—that is, a case of mistaking the expedient device for the definitive truth.

According to Yinshun, in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*, "no mind" has two meanings: "emptiness of mind" (*xinkong*, 心空) and "unobtainability of mind" (*xinbude* 心不得). Since the mind's nature is quiescent and unobtainable, therefore, from the

standpoint of "ultimate and essential enlightenment" (*shengyi tiwu*, 勝義體悟), the mind is inherently pure.[69] By insisting on the inherent purity of the mind, this perspective proffered by the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* seems, at first glance, to contradict the claim made by the very same *sūtras* that the "no-mind" teaching ultimately negates the existence of the pure mind. However, upon further investigation, we will see that these texts mean something quite different when they mention the "inherent purity of the mind."

Commenting on the two meanings attributed to "no mind," Yinshun writes:

> 1. As for "this mind is no mind," one does not want to consider it as being a mind which is no mind (*yi feixin de xin*, 一非心的心)—this is the common sense view...one should not ask whether it exists or does not exist. "No mind" transcends the concepts of existence (being) and inexistence (nothingness) (*you yu wu*, 有與無). Thus, one is unable to say that it exists or that it does not exist.[70]

From this, we get an initial indication of what the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* mean by *xinxing benjing*. First, however, we need to explicate the meaning of existence or "being" and inexistence or "nothingness." The former describes entities or events as existing in an enduring, unchanging form (known otherwise as the extreme error of eternalism) whereas the latter indicates that they do not have any existence at all (known as the extreme error of annihilationism). Though they espouse contradictory perspectives, fundamental to both of these views is the notion of permanence. Holding the extreme view of "being" in relation to a "thing" (or circumstance) indicates that that

[69] In this chapter, Yinshun mentions that the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra inherited this view from the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras*. Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 81. In subsequent chapters, we will see that he argues this point extensively.
[70] Ibid., 80-81.

"thing" is perceived as possessing some kind of permanent existence. Similarly, utilizing the opposite extreme, "nothingness," to characterize an entity means that we understand that entity as permanently and definitely not existing. The doctrine of emptiness, as explicated typically in the Mahāyāna,[71] confutes both views. Things/circumstances exist, though causally, being dependent upon various conditions for their "origination." At the same time, things/circumstances do not exist if by this we mean that they possess own-being or an enduring self-nature. Thus, the false concepts of "being" and "nothingness" are refuted in this way.

Yinshun warns that no-mind should not be mistaken for the inexistence of mind. The average person using common sense and mundane knowledge to understand this idea holds that "no-mind" means that the mind does not exist. This interpretation commits the extreme error of annihilationism, for it suggests that the mind does not have any kind of existence whatsoever. In fact, no-mind should not be understood in terms of either eternalism or annihalationism because it transcends the limitations of both extremes. Therefore, we are told that "one is unable to say that it exists or that it does not exist."

[71]Perhaps the most influential thinker in the Mahāyāna, Nāgārjuna, deeply influenced by the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras*, contested the false views of "being" and "nothingness" in his seminal work the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. He refuted all concepts and conceptualization through his delineation of the "eight no's":

> (Therein, every event is "marked" by:) non-origination, non-extinction, non-destruction, non-permanence, non-identity, non-differentiation, non-coming (into being), non-going (out of being).

Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism*, 20.

> 2. As for the "no-mind"—the mind that is unknowable—it is said that it is indestructible (*avikāra*, 不壞) and non-discriminatory (*avikalpa*, 不分別); that is, there is no change and there is no difference...It is the Tathatā (*zhenru* 眞如). It does not refer to that which is discriminated by the worldly discriminatory mind (*shijian fenbiexin*, 世間分別心).[72]

"No-mind, "as described here, is a synonym for the word *tathatā*, which literally means "suchness" or "true thusness"—a universally pervading principle which refers to the true nature of things or things as they really are. Tathatā often serves as a synonym for emptiness. Later in his discussion of Yogācāra doctrine found in Chapter Seven of his *Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun defines suchness:

> Suchness is the pure empty nature (Skt. *śūnyatā viśuddha*: Chn. *kongxing qingjing* 空性清淨). Empty nature is no-self. It is not referring to the false self that sentient beings normally attach themselves to, but rather no-self and empty nature are the most excellent Self (*zui shengwo* 最勝我), which the Buddhas have attained.[73]

Likewise, then, "no-mind" is a synonym for emptiness—the emptiness that is the true nature of existence (suchness). As the true nature of existence, emptiness or, in our case, "no-mind," is indestructible and without distinction. In other words, it operates outside of the context of conventional language and thought, transcending the dualities and distinctions characteristic of commonsensical thinking. When the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* discuss the "Original Purity of the Mind," they intend it to refer to the "no-mind" understood as suchness. Thus, it is pure in that it is empty of all distinctions, even those conventionally designated as "pure and impure. In a discussion of the true nature of the

[72] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 80-81.

world. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* writes: "And how does perfect wisdom show up the world for what it is? She shows that the world is empty. unthinkable. calmly quiet. As purified of itself she shows up the world. she makes it known. she indicates it."[74] Because the world is empty of permanent. independent existence. it is pure. In the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras*. the inherent purity of mind. according to Yinshun. refers to the inherent emptiness of phenomenal existence.

2.2.2. THE BODHISATTVA MIND

The *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras*. in their explication of mind. discuss two other important concepts: the bodhisattva mind (Skt. *bodhisattva-citta*; Chn. *pusaxin* 菩薩心) and the "mind of enlightenment" (Skt. *bodhicitta*; Chn. *putixin* 菩提心). Based on the *Xiaopin* sections of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*, Yinshun delineates seven descriptions of the *pusaxin* and the *putixin:*

1. No-thought is the bodhisattva mind (*bunian shi pusaxin*. 不念是菩薩心)
2. The mind that does not pertain to thought is the bodhisattva (*xin budang nian shi pusa*. 心不當念是菩薩)
3. In his mind. one should not think [the thought that] "I am a bodhisattva" (*qi xin budang zi nian wo shi pusa*. 其心不當自念我是菩薩)
4. No-grasping is the bodhisattva mind (*buzhizhuo shi pusaxin*. 不執著是菩薩心)

[73] Ibid. 192.
[74] Edward Conze. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary* (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation. 1990). 179. See his chapter entitled. "Showing the World." 172-179.

5. Although the bodhisattva learns like this, he should not give rise in the mind [the thought that] "I learn like this."(*bi pusa sui ru shi xue, bu ying sheng xin wo ru shi xue*, 彼菩薩雖如是學，不應生心我如是學)

6. Not responding to thought is the self-knowing the mind of enlightenment (*budang nian shi wo zhidao yi*, 不當念是我知道意)[75]

7. No-grasping is the great mind of enlightenment (*bu zhizhuo da puti xin*, 不執著大菩提心).[76]

After briefly introducing *the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (*da borejing*, 大般若經) and its relationship to the *Xiaopin Prajñāparamitā Sūtra*,[77] Yinshun begins his explanation of the bodhisattva mind by paraphrasing the words of Subhuti,[78] one of the chief interlocutors found in the *Prajñāparamitā* literature: "As for the bodhisattva, the bodhisattva's name is inapprehensible (or unknowable, *bukede* 不可得): As for *prajñā*, *prajñā*'s name is inapprehensible. Both *prajñā* and the bodhisattva are inapprehensible."[79] To say that an object or concept is "inapprehensible" is to say that it lacks any kind of inherent, unchanging self-existence. Thus, for a thing to be apprehensible, it must have a permanent existence. However, according to the doctrine of emptiness objects and ideas by nature lack such an existence. They are empty of own-

[75] The compound *daoyi* 道意 is an old translation of *bodhicitta*.
[76] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 81.
[77] For example, Yinshun notes that Xuanzang in the Tang dynasty translated the fifth part of the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, which then becomes the briefest *sūtra* of this genre. He then state that both the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* and the *Xiaopin Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* treat the concepts of the "bodhisattva" and the "mind." Ibid., 82.
[78] Subhūti (Xuputi, 須菩提) is one of the Buddha's ten great disciples (*shi dadizi*, 十大弟子) and principal interlocutor of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* in the discussions with the Buddha about the notion that "all is empty."
[79] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 82.

being. "Inapprehensibility," like no-mind, then, is essentially a synonym for emptiness, referring to the notion that no entity or concept—including wisdom and the bodhisattva—possesses an independent, permanent self. Yinshun, in order to underscore this point, indicates that both the signifiers—the linguistic labels, "wisdom" and "bodhisattva"—and what they signify are devoid of permanent existence. In other words, the signifiers lack a stable referent and therefore are likewise unstable. Language and its objects (i.e., all things) are both empty.

Moreover, insight into the "inapprehensibility" of things is the means by which the bodhisattva can have insight into the perfection of wisdom, and thereby attain enlightenment. Yinshun writes:

> One, having heard of this [inapprehensibility], can realize enlightenment, without fear or perturbation--that, then, is the perfection of wisdom that the bodhisattva should learn. As for the learning of the bodhisattva, no-thought (*bu nian* 不念)—that is, no-grasping (*bu zhizhuo* 不執著), no-arrogance (*bu gaoman* 不高慢)—is the bodhisattva mind...just as it is so for the bodhisattva and wisdom—the self (*wo* 我) and the dharma (*fa* 法) are both also inapprehensible.[80]

In addition to inapprehensibility, no-thought, no-grasping, and no-arrogance distinguish the mind of the bodhisattva. Only by cultivating these characteristics within his own mind can the bodhisattva have insight into the wisdom that all things are empty of inherent existence. Yinshun argues that in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* the teaching of the inapprehensibility of the dharmas and the self is the method by which the bodhisattva can realize the truth of emptiness and understand its implications:

[80] Ibid.

"[responding to the wisdom of the teachings] causes the bodhisattva to return to observing his/her own mind—to know that the self and the dharmas are the inapprehensible mind. They are inapprehensible and ungraspable."[81] Inapprehensibility and no-thought, no-grasping, and no-arrogance as synonyms for emptiness are the causes for and result of enlightenment. In other words, Yinshun suggests that emptiness teachings are the means for realizing emptiness, that is, for attaining enlightenment.

2.2.3. BODHICITTA, LUMINOUS PURITY, AND EMPTINESS

Eventually, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the "bodhisattva mind" was transformed into the *bodhicitta*, becoming the focal point of Mahāyāna doctrine and practice. Yinshun demonstrates the importance of this concept by indicating references to it found in influential Mahāyāna works. For example, he quotes the following texts:

1. The *Da mingdu jing* 大明度經 which writes, "not accepting thought is the self knowing the *bodhicitta*" (*budang nian shi wo zhidao yi* 不當念是我知道意).

2. The fourth part of the *Da bore jing* 大般若經 which states that "non-grasping is the great *bodhicitta*" (*buzhizhuo da putixin* 不執著大菩提心).

[81] Ibid.

3. The Sanskrit *Baqian song borejing* 八千頌般若經 (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*), which writes, "*bodhicitta* does not respond to attachments" (*putixin bu yingzhe* 菩提心不應著).

4. The *Dapin bore jing* 大品般若經 and the *Shiwan song bore* 十萬頌般若, which list *bodhicitta* along with two other descriptions of mind, namely, the unequalled mind (*wudeng* 無等等心, *asamasama-citta*) and the vast mind (*guangda xin* 廣大心, *udāra-citta*).[82]

According to the *Perfection of Wisdom* texts, the original pure nature, which one realizes from observing the mind in meditation evolves into the original pure nature of the *bodhicitta*. Yinshun explains that the compound *qingjing* (清淨， Skt. *prabhāsvara*), referred to in the phrase "the original pure nature of the mind,"[83] means "luminous purity" (*mingjing*, 明淨)—a term inherited from the *Āgamas*.[84] "Purity," however, not only describes the original nature of the mind, but also characterizes all of the *dharmas* whether they be mental or physical characteristics, sagely or common people, or the way and its results. Having the meaning of "unpolluted" (*wuran* 無染), the concept implies that the *dharmas*, though adventitiously subject to contamination, in essence lack impurities and therefore remain fundamentally undefiled. Thus, we see that "purity"

[82] Kumarajiva, in his translation of the *Dapinbanruojin*, refers to the three aspects of mind as the *deshixin* (得是心), unequalled mind, and the great mind (*daxin* 大心)—the first being the corrupted form of *puti xin* (*bodhicitta*). Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 83.
[83] In the phrase "Original Purity of the Mind" or *xinxing benjing* (心性本淨), the compound *qingjing* does not appear, but rather is implied by the character *jing* (淨), both of which can be translated into English as "purity."

indicates the intrinsic nature of all dharmas. However, lest we reify this nature, attributing to it an inherent existence that it does not have, Yinshun emphatically insists upon equating "purity" with emptiness:

> Following what the *sūtras* and treatises say, purity, non-arising (*wusheng* 無生), emptiness (*kong* 空), etc., are "different names for the same reality." From the perspective of the realm (*jing*) [of enlightenment], it (purity) is called "suchness"(Chn. *zhenru*眞如; Skt. *tathata*), *dharma* realm (Chn. *fajie* 法界; Skt. *dharma-dhatu*), "thusness as the bounds of all reality" (Chn. *shiji* 實際; Skt. *bhuta-koti*), etc. From the perspective of practice, it is called emptiness, without characteristic (*wuxiang* 無相), and wisdom (*banruo* 般若). From the perspective of result (*guo* 果), it is called enlightenment (bodhi *puti* 菩提), nirvana (*niepan* 涅槃), etc. Although there are many names, they all express the content of enlightenment from the perspective of the ultimate (*shengyi* 勝義). [85]

Here Yinshun argues that purity has three meanings distinguishable according to the context in which it appears. When it refers to the ontological status of ultimate truth, purity denotes "suchness or "dharma-realm." If used from the perspective of praxis—that is, that which causes or leads to the experience of enlightenment—then it signifies emptiness. Emptiness, in this case, indicates the practice by which one develops insight into the impermanent, dependent, and selfless nature of all the dharmas. As for the third meaning, realizing that all things are empty of independent existence results in the attainment of enlightenment or nirvana—the effect or fruit of Buddhist cultivation.

Yinshun, in his reading of the *Perfection of Wisdom Literature*, finds that no distinction in meaning exists between emptiness and purity. The *dharmas* are both

[84] Refer to the quote taken from the *Anguttara Nikāya* found at the beginning of this chapter, pg. 49 .
[85] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 84.

originally and ultimately empty and pure: " As for emptiness and purity, only the names differ, but their content is the same."[86] Yet, Yinshun contends that when this literature utilizes purity in a conventional sense, it functions as an expedient device. People often misunderstand emptiness as meaning "nothingness," which can lead to any number of problems, including developing a fear of emptiness or pursuing misguided praxis. Referring to emptiness as "original purity" or "ultimate purity" counteracts the view that emptiness is nothingness. If people believe that the mind as a *dharma* is intrinsically pure, then they will trust that inherent to their own nature they have the potential for eliminating defilements and attaining enlightenment. Thus, much as in the pre-Mahāyāna literature, the conventional usage of the "Original Purity of the Mind" in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* operates as *upāya* for the purpose of revealing the mind's emptiness. However, from the perspective of ultimate truth, the purity of the mind is a synonym for the emptiness of the mind: "From these few Mahāyāna sūtras, we can see that 'the Original Purity of the Mind' is only the mind's emptiness. It is another name for the 'inapprehensible...'"[87]

The view held by the *Āgamas* and those early sects of Buddhism that espoused concepts like the "Original Purity of the Mind" came dangerously close, in Yinshun's estimation, to reifying the pure mind—a view which contradicts the doctrines of no-self and dependent origination. Yinshun, however, recognizes that such a perspective has expedient value. Since it resonates with the understanding of the mind held by the common person, the pure mind teaching encourages beings to take up Buddhist practice.

[86] Ibid., 85.

Moreover, its familiarity eases their fears about the difficulty of the practice. However, through his use of the Four *Siddhāntas* and his discussion of the metaphors as conventional means, we have seen Yinshun go to great lengths to demonstrate that this teaching operates only as an expedient device—one that has the purpose of eventually leading people along a path that will culminate in the realization that the self lacks inherent, independent existence.

Yinshun derives his interpretation of the "Original Purity of the Mind" found in pre-Mahāyāna sources from its formulation in the *Prajñāpāramitā* Sūtras. These *sūtras* in their presentation of the "no-mind," *bodhisattva* mind, and *bodhicitta* concepts develop this theory not only by demonstrating its function as an expedient means ultimately leading to insight into the emptiness of the mind, but also by indicating its use as a synonym for the mind's emptiness (*xinkong*).

We must conclude our discussion of Yinshun's treatment of *xinxing benjing* by investigating how he understands the way in which the concept of the "Original Purity of the Mind" contributed to the development of the *tathāgatagarbha*. After examining the *Chengshilun*'s presentation of the "Original Purity of the Mind," Yinshun interjects a comment on the *tathāgatagarbha* which reveals his own interpretation of the doctrine. He asks the question, "Why do sentient beings discuss the *tathāgatagarbha*?" He then states that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*Baoxing lun*, 寶性論) gives five reasons, but he only quotes the first: "because they have fearful and weak minds" (*yi you qie ruo xin* 以有怯弱心)[88] Yinshun writes: "This agrees with the *Chengshilun's* theory of 'those who are negligent'

[87]Ibid., 87.

(*wei xiedai zhe* 爲懈怠者) and with the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*'s theory of 'people engendering goodness.'"[89] By associating the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine with these two theories, Yinshun indicates that he interprets it as a non-definitive teaching—an expedient device designed to help those with weak minds take up Buddhist practice.

However, Yinshun takes a very different view of the relationship between the *tathāgatagarbha* and the "Original Purity of the Mind" as found in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. He suggests that certain aspects of the *xinxing benjing* theory share important similarities with *tathāgatagarbha* thought. For example, the notion that all sentient beings possess the "originally pure mind" is not unlike the idea that all sentient beings inherently have the *tathāgatagarbha*—the original *tathāgata* nature that gives sentient beings the potential to become Buddhas. Moreover, the *tathāgatagarbha* is viewed as the basis of the common person and the sage as well as the pure and impure dharmas just as is the "Original Purity of the Mind":

> The essential purity of the *tathāgatagarbha* indicates sentient beings' original *tathāgata* nature which is the pure cause of becoming a Buddha; or it takes the *tathāgatagarbha* as the basis, establishing the common person and the sage, the impurity and purity of all *dharmas*.[90]

However, the important difference between the two, of course, is that *xinxing benjing* in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* can describe the ultimate nature of the mind only when it refers to the mind's emptiness. In subsequent chapters, we will treat in much detail

[88] *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun* 究竟一乘寶性論 T. 31.840.3
[89] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 74.
[90] Ibid., 85.

Yinshun's views on emptiness and the *tathāgatagarbha*. Although Yinshun recognizes the similarities between *tathāgatagarbha* theory and the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*' teaching of the "Original Purity of the Mind," he wants to distinguish them despite the fact that the distinction he makes is somewhat obscure. He points out that the primary intent of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* is that all dharmas are originally empty and originally pure. They do not emphasize the "Original Purity of the Mind" only, but rather that all things—the self and the dharmas, the body and the mind, the common person and the sage, as well as the path and the goal—are ultimately pure. He writes, "The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* theory of the Original Purity of the Mind possibly resulted in *tathāgatagarbha* theory, but it is not *tathāgatagarbha* theory."[91]

[91] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

YINSHUN'S ANALYSIS OF THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA'S* RELATIONSHIP TO *THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM SŪTRAS*, *THE HUAYAN SŪTRA*, AND *THE TATHĀGATAGARBHA SŪTRA*

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I presented Yinshun's investigation of the "Original Purity of the Mind" as the starting point for his discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha*. By examining its relationship to meditation practice, the metaphors associated with it, and its connection to other important pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna concepts, we saw Yinshun tracing the development of the "Original Purity of the Mind" from its appearance in the *Āgamas* and the literature of various non-Mahāyāna sects to its use in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*. Though he concludes that this teaching is distinct from the *tathāgatagarbha*, which he views as having its origins in Mahāyāna Buddhism, he recognizes that the "Original Purity of the Mind" shares important similarities with the *tathāgatagarbha* and thus is important for understanding its evolution.

In Chapter Four of his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, entitled "The Development and Completion of the *Tathāgatagarbha* Doctrine," Yinshun not only continues his discussion of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*, but also focuses on the role played by the *Huayan Sūtra* and the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* in the development of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. He divides the chapter into four sections. In the first, "The Equality of All Dharmas and the Non-Obstruction of Phenomena," Yinshun discusses the concepts of *fafa pingdeng* (法法平等) and *shishi wuai* (事事無礙) as they appeared in

rudimentary form in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and as they subsequently developed into more sophisticated teachings in the *Huayan Sūtra*. In the next section of the chapter, "The Implied Meanings of the *Tathāgatagarbha* Theory Found in the *Huayan Sūtra*," he provides an explanation of the metaphors that contributed to the formation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory found in the "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter," "The Ten Stages Chapter," and "The Vairocana Chapter" of the *Huayan Sūtra*. The third section, entitled "Mind, *Bodhicitta*, *Bodhi*, and the Realm of Sentient Beings," details the relationship between the concepts of "the mind of enlightenment," "wisdom," and sentient beings while at the same time demonstrating how the interpretations of these ideas share much in common with later understandings of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Finally, the last section, called simply "The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*," explains the nine metaphors found in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, drawing connections between similar metaphors that appear in the *Huayan Sūtra* and related texts. I will present Yinshun's ideas in these four sections, calling attention to his continued emphasis on the doctrine of emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and his insistence that the *tathāgatagarbha* is merely an expedient means.

3.1. THE "EQUALITY OF ALL DHARMAS" AND THE "NON-OBSTRUCTION OF PHENOMENA"

In the first section of Chapter Four, "The Sameness of Dharmas and the Non-obstruction of Phenomena," Yinshun argues that *tathāgatagarbha* theory does not originate in early Buddhism, although concepts related to it can be found there. Inheriting ideas from early Mahāyāna Buddhism and adapting to the conventional world, it has a unique development in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism. To support their views, proponents of the theory often point to similar ideas found in two texts very influential in early Mahāyāna: the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and the *Huayan Sūtra*. With this in mind, Yinshun divides this section into two parts, beginning first with a presentation of the ideas later interpreted as antecedents to *tathāgatagarbha* theory found in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and concluding with an examination of those found in the *Huayan Sūtra*.

3.1.1. THE *PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ* LITERATURE

The *Prajñāpāramitā* literature argues not only that all things, including the various types of beings, namely, *sravakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *tathāgatas*, are empty of permanent existence, but also that the fundamental nature of the ultimate itself, variously described as *tathatā* (*zhenru* 眞如), *dharma-dhātu* (*fajie* 法界), or *bhūta-koṭi* (*shiji* 實際), is emptiness and quiescence (*benxing kongji* 本性空寂). That is, the underlying essence of all things—the "suchness" of all things—is emptiness. Since all entities and ideas are empty of permanent existence, from the standpoint of the ultimate,

they cannot be differentiated and thus are in essence non-dual. All distinctions between things disappear upon the realization that they lack a stable and unchanging existence.[92] Hence, Yinshun points out that in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature we find the characteristic denial of opposites: "therefore, there is no first and last, no inside and outside, no this and that, no birth and death of the body, no purity and impurity of substance, and no increase and decrease of measurement that can be discussed."[93]

Because all things are non-dual and lack discrimination, the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature concludes that no distinction can exist between sentient beings and Buddhas. Yinshun elucidates this point in his discussion of the relationship between the "wisdom eye" (*huiyan* 慧眼) and the "Buddha eye" (*foyan* 佛眼). The wisdom eye is the vision power that correctly analyzes things as lacking real and substantial existence. Bodhisattvas use this power to overcome discriminatory thinking and thereby generate an immediate perception of wisdom (*xianzheng banruo* 現證般若). Yinshun, quoting the *Mohe bore puoluomi Sūtra*, further indicates that the "wisdom eye" is such that it "does not think about all the dharmas," and yet "is without a single dharma that it does not know."[94] Thus, it can know all the dharmas without having to think about them. Of course, such a statement presents a paradox. After all, how can one know something if he does not think about it first? Yinshun, however, does not elaborate on this issue.

[92] In the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, the notion that all things are non-dual and lack discrimination from the standpoint of the ultimate develops into the concepts of "all things are fundamentally empty" (*yiqie ben kong*), " all things are suchness" (*yiqie jie ru*), and "all things are equal" (*yiqie pingdeng*). Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 90.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 91.

Instead, he calls attention to the fact that the ability to know all the dharmas is a function of the "Buddha eye." The Buddha eye is the eye of perfect omniscience, gained upon the attainment of Buddhahood. Therefore, supposedly only Buddhas have the Buddha eye. However, according to the *Da Zhidu Lun*, the Buddha-eye and the wisdom eye are essentially the same. Yinshun explains:

> "Without a dharma not known" belongs to the Buddha eye. Why does it also serve as the content of the wisdom eye? The *Zhilun* explains it as "when the wisdom eye becomes the Buddha, its name changes to the Buddha eye."[This statement] expresses that the only difference between the wisdom eye and the Buddha eye is the name. This is a difference of depth and not a difference in the essential nature [of the two].[95]

When the bodhisattva penetrates the Dharma Nature, the Buddha eye is the wisdom eye. Likewise, when ultimate luminous purity is fully obtained—that is, when Buddhahood is achieved—then the wisdom eye becomes the Buddha eye. No real distinction exists between them. They are provisional names used to distinguish, conventionally, the understanding of those who have not yet become Buddhas from that of those who have. But, as Yinshun indicates, from the perspective of the ultimate, the distinction between the two is empty as is the distinction between the enlightened and the unenlightened. The *Prajñāpāramitā* literature equates the Buddha eye and the wisdom eye in order to demonstrate that Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings are equally empty and thus devoid ultimately of any truly existent difference. In fact, all things are like this. Yinshun

[95] Ibid., 92.

writes: "All dharmas return to all dharmas. Actually, it is that all dharmas return to the nature of all dharmas—the ultimate that cannot be obtained (emptiness, suchness)."[96]

3.1.2. *HUAYAN SŪTRA*

The important concepts of the *Huayan Sūtra*, namely "the sameness of all dharmas" (*fafa pingdeng* 法法平等) and "the non-obstruction of phenomena" (*shishi wuai* 事事無礙) also have the doctrine of emptiness as their basis. All the dharmas are equal because they share the same nature, namely emptiness. The various names for things are merely conventional designations that ultimately do not exist: "the ultimate equality of the dharmas is like saying phenomenal characteristics (*shixiang* 事相)—the common person and sage (*fansheng* 凡生), the way and the results (*daoguo* 道果), *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* (*shengsi niepan* 生死涅槃), all are provisionally established (*shishe*,施設)."[97] Therefore, as he did in his discussion of the similarities between the "wisdom eye" and the "Buddha eye," Yinshun argues that because things lack permanent existence and are non-dual and indistinct from each other, they are essentially the same (*xiangji* 相即)[98] and thereby penetrate one another (*xiangru* 相入). This is the meaning of the phrase "the non-obstruction of all phenomena."[99]

[96] Ibid., 95.
[97] Ibid.
[98] The union of two phenomena, whereby they lose their distinction and become one.
[99] One should note that the relationship between emptiness, the non-obstruction of phenomena, and the sameness of all dharmas is somewhat more complex than presented by Yinshun in this section. The details of the relationship do not fall within the scope of the present study, however. As an introduction to the subject, the reader is urged to see Francis Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: the Jewel Net of Indra* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 67-74.

The teaching of the mutual non-obstruction of dharmas supports the view that sentient beings and Buddhas are essentially the same. As is the case with all phenomena, sentient beings interpenetrate with Buddhas and thereby are inseparable from them. In other words, they share the same nature:

> That sentient beings and the Tathāgata are non-dual and without distinction can be explained thusly: sentient beings are not separate (*buli* 不離) from the Tathāgata [and] the Tathāgata is not separate from sentient beings. Sentient beings are [exactly] (*ji* 即) the Tathāgata and the Tathāgata is [exactly] sentient beings.[100]

The theory that within the bodies of sentient beings there exists the womb of the Tathāgata, deriving in part from the view that the Buddha and sentient beings mutually and equally interpenetrate one another, appears in symbolic and metaphorical form in the *Huayan Sūtra*. Later proponents of the theory utilize the concepts found in this *sūtra* to substantiate their interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Yinshun in subsequent sections of Chapter Four will further elucidate the ideas in the *Huayan Sūtra* that influenced the development of *tathāgatagarbha* thought.

[100]Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 96.

3.2. THE IMPLIED MEANINGS OF THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* THEORY FOUND IN THE *HUAYAN SŪTRA*

In the second section of this chapter, entitled "The Implied Meanings of the *Tathāgatagarbha* Theory Found in the *Huayan Sūtra*," Yinshun carefully explains the concepts and literary devices in the *Huayan Sūtra* which gave rise to the fundamental teachings of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. He focuses primarily on the ideas found in the "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter"(*rulai xingqi pin*) 如來性起品, "The Ten Stages Chapter" 十地品, and the "Vairocana Chapter"盧舍那品 of the *Huayan Sūtra*.

3.2.1. TATHĀGATA'S NATURE ORIGINATION CHAPTER

Much of the "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter" (*Rulai xingqi pin*) is devoted to explaining the idea that all sentient beings already fully possess the enlightened wisdom of the Tathāgata, thereby making them no different from the Buddhas. In his discussion of this chapter from which he quotes extensively, Yinshun demonstrates that the notion of the Buddha's wisdom inherent in all beings functions as an important precursor to the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine that appears in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra.*

Central to the import of the *Rulai xingqi pin* is the metaphor of the "big painting cloth, the size equal to the Great 3-thousand thousands of Worlds entering one particle of an atom:"[101]

[101] *Sanqian daqian shijie jingjuan zai yiwei chen nei* 三千大千世界經卷在一微塵內.

> O Son of the Buddha, suppose there would be a big painting cloth, of the size equal to the Great 3-thousand thousands of Worlds. And indeed, on this big cloth, the whole Great 3-thousand thousands of Worlds would be described completely...Furthermore, [suppose] this very big cloth would enter within one particle of an atom. Just as this big cloth lies with one small particle of an atom, in the same way, in each of all the other particles of atoms, too, there enters a big cloth of the same size.[102]

This metaphor demonstrates that the Tathāgata's wisdom permeates equally the minds of all sentient beings just as the cloth penetrates every particle of every atom:[103] "the Wisdom of the Tathāgata, which is the immeasurable wisdom...thoroughly penetrates within the mentality of every living being. And every mental disposition of a living being has the same size as this wisdom."[104] Unfortunately, however, defilements and misconceptions obscure this inherent wisdom, interfering with the ability of most sentient beings to recognize that their minds possess it. Only after the practitioner removes these obstructions can the Buddha's wisdom clearly appear:

> There is no one group among the group of living beings in whose body the Wisdom of the Tathāgata does not penetrate at all. Nevertheless, as taking [wrong] conceptions, [a person] cannot cognize the Buddha's Wisdom [residing in himself]. By removing this taking of conceptions, the Wisdom of Omniscience, self-born Widsom, makes its appearance again unobstructedly.[105]

[102] Takasaki, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, 189-190. Note that quotations from the "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter" all come from a large section (namely, T. no. 278, 9.623c-624a) that Yinshun quotes at the beginning of his discussion of this text. The English translations of this section will be taken from Takasaki's translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.
[103] It is important to note that what I am calling here, the "minds of sentient beings," is actually written in the *Huayan Sutra* as *zhongsheng shen* 眾生身, which may lead one to translate it as the "bodies of sentient beings." In Sanskrit, this term is written *sattva-citta-saṃtāna*. Yinshun insists that it should be rendered into Chinese as *zhongsheng xinxiangxu* 眾生心相續 which translates into English roughly as "the mental continuum of sentient beings." Takasaki Jikido agrees with Yinshun, thus, translating the term into English as "the mentality of every living being." Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 99 and Takasaki, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, 191, footnote 44.
[104] Ibid., 191.
[105] Ibid., 189.

Understandably, many proponents of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine have regarded the "Wisdom of the Tathāgata" as a synonym for the *tathāgatagarbha*. Both concepts emphasize that sentient beings possess something inherent to their natures that once realized results in liberation—an enlightenment indistinguishable from that of the Buddhas. Moreover, the way that the *Rulai xingqi pin* elucidates the relationship between the Buddha's wisdom and the hindrances which obstruct it is very similar to how the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* depicts the interaction between the *tathāgatagarbha* and the various defilements. In one example, this *Sūtra* likens the *tathāgatagarbha* to a gold trinket and the defilements to waste that covers it. Just as one would clean the waste off the gold in order to appreciate its worth, the practitioner eliminates the defilements so that his *tathāgatagarbha* can fully emerge.[106] Finally, the various translations of the *Rulai xingqi pin*, namely the Jin and Tang translations of the *Huayan Sūtra* and the *Rulai xingxianjing*, mention the *tathāgatagarbha* in connection with the "wisdom of the Tathāgata" as well as with the "Tathāgata's nature origination"[107]

Nevertheless, Yinshun argues that despite their similarities the two doctrines do not have the same meaning. Though the three translations mention the term *tathāgatagarbha* in their treatment of the "Tathāgata's nature origination," they employ it in a manner not typical among later interpretations of the concept. In the translations of the *Huayan Sūtra*, the *tathāgatagarbha* is equated with the term *rulai mimi zang*

[106] Grosnick, "Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra," 98.
[107] For example, when Buddhabhadra translates the concept of "Tathāgata's nature origination," he mentions the *tathāgatagarbha*, describing it as subtle and mysterious. Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 99.

如來秘密藏, or "the secret store of the Tathāgata" The compound, "*mimi zang*,"[108] refers to a storehouse of secret and subtle teachings that only Buddhas can fully fathom. Its use in the context of the *Rulai xingqi pin* suggests that the notion of the Tathāgata's wisdom inherent in the minds of all sentient creatures is an esoteric doctrine, difficult for the common person to understand. Only from the perspective of enlightenment can one completely grasp its purported intent.

According to Yinshun, later interpretations parsed the word, "*zang*" (or "*garbha*") as "womb"[109] rather than as a storehouse of "special" teachings accessible only to the enlightened. Thus, *rulaizang* came to mean "womb of the Tathāgata," implying that all sentient beings have the potential to attain Buddhahood. Yinshun recognizes, though, that the teaching of the "wisdom of the Tathāgata inherent in the minds of sentient beings" is similar to *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine espoused by later texts and thinkers. He even acknowledges that these later thinkers often quoted the *Rulai xingqi pin* to support their views about this teaching. However, based on the different interpretations of the word "*garbha*" found in the *Rulai xingqi pin* and the texts which clearly promote *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, Yinshun insists that these two teachings are by no means equivalent. He writes:

> "The three different translations all call this dharma-gate the secret store of the Tathāgata...[the *garbha* in this compound] is not the *garbha* which means womb...the thought [of the Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter

[108] Also, *mimi chu* 秘密處 (Skt. *guhya-sthāna*). Muller translates this term as "the secret dharma store," defining it as "teachings that the unenlightened cannot easily understand." Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 11 November 2001.
[109] *taizang* 胎藏

> approximates that of *tathāgatagarbha* theory], but it does not yet have the designation of "womb" in the compound *tathāgatagarbha*."[110]

3.2.2. THE TEN STAGES CHAPTER

In our discussion of the "Original Purity of the Mind" found in Chapter Two, we encountered the gold and jewel metaphors (*jinyu* 金喻and *baoyu* 寶喻, respectively) which symbolize both the inherent purity of the mind and the process through which to reveal it. In the "Ten Stages Chapter"[111] of the *Huayan Sūtra*, wherein the ten stages of bodhisattva practice is delineated, we discover the same metaphors.

The gold metaphor (otherwise known as the "smelting gold" metaphor) appears scattered throughout the discussion in the "Ten Stages Chapter" of the bodhisattva's cultivation. In that context, it is used to explain how the "virtuous good roots" (*gongde shangen* 功德善根) need to be developed in each of the ten stages, beginning with the first and moving subsequently, stage by stage, until the tenth. Intimately associated with the development of "virtuous good roots" is the cultivation of *bodhi* (wisdom) and virtue. For the bodhisattva, such cultivation is the most important focus in religious praxis. Hence, the teaching in the "Ten Stages Chapter" is often called the principle of the "gradual perfection of total wisdom and virtue" (*jian bei yiqie zhide* 漸備一切智德).[112]

Yinshun describes the specific content of the "gold metaphor" as follows: in order for one to make the gold into jewelry, he must extract it from ore and then refine it until

[110] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 99.
[111] The "Ten Stages Chapter" of the *Huayan Sūtra* discusses in detail the bodhisattva path, delineating the ten stages that a practitioner must pass through in order to attain enlightenment. For a list of the ten stages Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 11 November 2001.

all of the surrounding impurities are eliminated. However, whether or not one goes through this process, the gold's essential nature remains the same. Though it is mixed with dirt, grime, and other worthless metals, its inherent nature remains in its perfected state—pure gold. The contaminants are adventitious and merely need to be removed to uncover the beautiful and valuable metal. Similarly, sentient beings already possess *bodhi* in its perfected state. However, it does not become manifest because the hindrances and obstructions (*kleśas*) taint it.[113] Only after the adept has eliminated these *kleśas* through the practice of the ten stages will his inherent *bodhi* reveal itself. Thus, in the metaphor, the gold represents the wisdom intrinsic to all sentient creatures while the surrounding dirt symbolizes the imperfections that prevent them from realizing it.

The jewel metaphor in the "Ten Stages Chapter" differs slightly from what we analyzed in the *Āgamas* and the literature of Nikāya Buddhism. In the *Āgamas*, the jewel was a precious stone that had to be extracted from the earth. In the Huayan chapter, however, the jewel is no mere gemstone, but rather a wish-fulfilling jewel (*mani* jewel) that will grant its keeper any wish. Before it can do so, though, it must be pulled up from the sea and then subjected to an elaborate cleaning process: "the great wish-fulfilling jewel (*da moni bao*大摩尼寶) is obtained from the sea and by means of the refining process it is hung on a tall post [to let] the water shower down on all [other] treasures"[114]

The wish-fulfilling jewel here symbolizes "the mind of enlightenment" (*bodhicitta*)—the intention to attain enlightenment in order to help all beings do the same.

[112] Note that this is a title for one of the translations of the "Ten Stages Chapter" that circulates as a separate text. It indicates the importance of the cultivation of wisdom and virtue within the bodhisattva path.
[113] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 100.

A practitioner must engender *bodhicitta* prior to embarking on the ten stages just as one must dredge up the *mani* jewel from the sea in order to reap its benefits. Though the jewel requires further refinement after being taken from the sea, its essential nature and excellent function exist in completed form within it even before the refinement process begins. The "mind of enlightenment," Yinshun points out, likewise necessitates additional cultivation. The process from the initial stage to the tenth stage outlined in the "Ten Stages Chapter" can be understood as the cultivation of *bodhi* from the time of its first arising to the time of its perfection. Yet, just as in the case with the *mani* jewel, *bodhicitta* exists fully within the practitioner even before she takes up the practice of the ten stages.[115]

According to Yinshun, both the gold and *maṇi* jewel metaphors serve the purpose of explaining the state and quality of the wisdom inherent in all beings as well as the process required to reveal it. They explain that when *bodhi* is separated from defilements it manifests "unsurpassed purity (究竟清淨), establishing the excellent function of benefiting sentient beings (利生德用)."[116] Though in the various translations of the "Ten Stages Chapter" one will not find the term *rulaizang*, nevertheless *rulaizang* thinkers contend that the *bodhi* inherent in sentient beings has essentially the same meaning and plays essentially the same role as the *tathāgatagarbha*. Therefore, they refer to the "Ten Stages Chapter," just as they do the "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter," to support their position.

[114] Ibid.

3.2.3. THE VAIROCANA CHAPTER

The Vairocana Chapter[117] of the *Huayan Sūtra* depicts Vairocana's world as a *Huazang zhuangyan shijie hai* (華藏莊嚴世界海 *Kusuma-tala-garbha-vyūhālaṃkāra-lokadhātu-samudra*), which is located inside a lotus flower. Yinshun describes it as follows: "The world is located in this lotus flower. Within the world, there appears a Buddha. There are numerous bodhisattvas following him, flanking him on both sides. All of these also sit in the lotus flower. The Buddha and the world peacefully reside within this flower."[118]

According to Yinshun, in Buddhism there are two important metaphors associated with the lotus flower: the lotus flower arising from the mud and the fruit that grows inside the flower. To begin with, in early Buddhism, exemplified by such texts as the *Āgamas* and the Dhammapada (*Dharma-phrase Sutra*),[119] the lotus flower symbolizes the untainted purity of the sage's moral character. The lotus flower grows out of muddy water, arising as a beautiful, unstained white flower emanating a pleasant fragrance. Likewise, the sage's character is not affected by impure defilements. Instead it remains pure and dignified. Moreover, though the flower is unaffected by the mud, it still grows in it, thus not being entirely detached from it. Similarly, in the Mahāyāna tradition, the sage, namely the bodhisattva, does not become defiled by samsara and the hindrances.

[115] Ibid., 100-101.
[116] Ibid.
[117] This chapter is the same in both the Jin and Tang translations of the *Huayan Sūtra*.
[118] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 101.
[119] *Dharma-Phrase Sūtra* is a two fascicle text written by Dharmatrāta Fajiu 法救 and translated into Chinese by Wei Zhinan 維祇難. It is a collection of phrases comprising the basic teachings of Buddhist morality. The Chinese version contains 758 verses. T 210.4.559-574.

but neither does he become completely separated from them. He remains in the world. but not affected by the world.

The second metaphor describes the condition of the fruit that exists inside the lotus flower. From the time the flower is a bud to the time it blooms. the fruit inside it grows. When the flower has opened and the petals have dropped. then the fruit becomes manifest. The flower symbolizes the bodhisattva path (*pusa xing* 菩薩行) and the lotus fruit (*lianshi* 蓮實) represents the goal of Buddhism. namely. *bodhi*. If we follow the implied intent of the metaphor. then we learn that *bodhi* already exists within the practitioner even while he engages in the bodhisattva path. Nonetheless. that he must practice at all indicates that *bodhi* must be nurtured. Thus, only upon completion of the practices of the "ten stages" will the *bodhi* within him be revealed: "While one cultivates the bodhisattva path. the fruit of Buddhahood (*foguo* 佛果) already exists within [him]. When the causal practices (*yinxing* 因行)[120] are fulfilled. perfect *bodhi* (*yuanman puti* 圓滿菩提) [will be completed]." [121]

Indicating the importance of this metaphor. Yinshun notes that both the *Huayan Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra* use the lotus flower as a metaphor for Buddhahood. The "Vairocana Chapter" uses the images of the *Huazang zhuangyan shijie hai* and the Buddha and bodhisattvas seated on a lotus flower to indicate that *bodhi* originally exists within the practitioner and that Buddhist praxis has the function of "awakening" the practitioner to his inherent enlightenment.

[120] Indicates those practices (*xiuxing* 修行) that result in the attainment of enlightenment.
[121] Yinshun. *Rulaizang*. 102.

Yinshun contends that the image of a lotus flower containing sacred beings, such as Buddhas and bodhisattvas, has its genesis in Hindu mythology, indicating specifically the story of the lotus flower growing out of Visnu's navel that contains Brahma, the King of Heaven. For Yinshun, this connection to traditional Indian mythology indicates that the images of the flower repository world abiding within the lotus as well as the Buddha and bodhisattvas seated in the lotus derive from what he calls "following the mundane dharma" (*sui shisufa* 隨世俗法). Since these images were so common in Indian religious and cultural contexts, they quickly and easily spread within Buddhist circles, being used as symbols conveying such Buddhist teachings as, for example, the fundamentally pure mind. According to Yinshun, the appropriation of these symbols by Buddhism occurs early in Buddhist history, already appearing in the *Āgamas* and the *Dharma Phrases Sūtra* and featuring as a prominent symbol on the *stūpas* and *caityas*[122] during the period of sectarian Buddhism.

The popularity of the lotus flower image also facilitated the general populace's acceptance and understanding of certain Buddhist teachings. One such teaching was the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. The lotus flower was often used as a metaphor for explaining the *tathāgatagarbha* and how to uncover it. People could readily identify with the meaning implied by the metaphor because they were already familiar with its use in religious and cultural settings outside of Buddhism.

[122] A *stūpas* is a mound-like monument in which is buried the relics of the Buddha, a great sage, or other object of veneration such as a *sūtra*. A *caityas* is a monument or sanctuary that recalls the person of the Buddha or an event in his life. Sometimes it is used as a synonym for *stūpa*. John S. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 357 and 360.

By categorizing it as "mundane dharma" (*shisufa* 世俗法), Yinshun suggests that the lotus flower metaphor is an *upāya*, an expedient means (*fangbian* 方便) designed to help sentient beings comprehend certain Buddhist doctrines. He has argued elsewhere that *upāya* applies not only to individuals, but also to particular historical and cultural venues.[123] Thus, in the case of India the lotus served as a particularly helpful device for popularizing these teachings within traditional Indian society. But Yinshun, in his discussion of the "Vairocana Chapter," implies that the doctrines associated with the lotus metaphor, namely the *tathāgatagarbha*, are, likewise, only expedient devices and therefore not definitive expressions of Buddhist truth. He writes, "The *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, which has this kind of meaning (the meaning associated with the image of the Tathāgata seated on a throne in the lotus flower), also then adapts to the mundane and thereby spreads."[124] In this way, Yinshun subtly interjects into his discussion of the lotus metaphor a critique of the view that holds the *tathāgatagarbha* as the highest expression of Buddhist truth.

In this second section of Chapter Four, Yinshun explains the metaphors in the *Huayan Sūtra* that were later incorporated in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* or utilized as scriptural support by those espousing *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. The painting cloth, gold, wish-fulfilling gem, and lotus flower metaphors indicate that sentient beings have intrinsic to their nature an aspect of the ultimate that can be revealed through proper cultivation. However, in the context of the *Huayan Sūtra*, these metaphors specifically signify the Buddha's wisdom, otherwise known as *bodhi*. Therefore, though Yinshun

[123] See Yinshun, *Yi Fofa Yanjiu Fofa* 以佛法研究佛法, 3-8.

regards them as important elements in the development of *tathāgatagarbha* theory, he cautions against reading them as directly or even indirectly symbolic of the *tathāgatagarbha*. He insists that even when the word *zang* (*garbha*) appears in the *Huayan Sūtra*, as in the compound *huazang* ("flower repository" 華藏), it does not have the meaning of "womb," which is one of the later interpretations of the term. For example, at the conclusion of his presentation of the "Vairocana Chapter," Yinshun points out that though the Tibetan version of the *Huayan Sūtra* translates the word *zang* in *huazang* as "womb," the Tang Dynasty version does not intend that meaning in the phrase *Huazang shijiehai*.[125] In saying this, he implies that the attempt to identify the "Buddha's wisdom" with the *tathāgatagarbha* occurs later when the metaphors are appropriated to support *tathāgatagarbha* thought.

[124] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 102.
[125] Ibid.

3.3. MIND, BODHICITTA, BODHI, AND SENTIENT BEINGS

Yinshun argues that the Huayan tradition utilizes the metaphors found in the *Huayan Sūtra* to publicize and exalt those teachings that emphasize the Tathāgata's constancy (*chang* 常), permanence (*heng* 恒), and existence (*youxing* 有性). Later, the tradition combined these attributes of the Tathāgata with the concepts of the *tathāgatagarbha*, *tathāgatadhātu* (*rulaijie* 如來界), *buddhagarbha* (*fozang* 佛藏), *buddhadhātu* (*foxing* 佛性), *sattvadhātu* (*zhongshengjie* 衆生界), and *ātman* (*wo* 我). These attributes and concepts taken together form the foundation of what Yinshun calls the "true self" (*zhenwo* 眞我)[126] or non-empty branch of Mahāyāna (*bukong dasheng de yi daliu* 不空大乘的一大流). This school of interpretation emphasizes the Tathāgata's resultant merit (*rulaiguode* 如來果德)[127] and the idea that sentient beings inherently

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[126] *zhenwo* has several meanings. It can refer to the view of a permanent self held by non-Buddhist religions and philosophies. In Buddhism, it appears as one of the six ways of arriving at the establishment of selfhood (*liuzhong ban woyi* 六種辨我義) as taught in Fazang's—k藏 *Commentary on the Sutra of Brahma's Net* (*Fangangjing Pusajie benshu* 梵網經菩薩戒本疏 T1813.40.606a23). The six ways are: "the grasping self" (*zhiwo* 執我), "the arrogant self" (*manwo* 慢我), "the self of latent karmic impressions" (*xiqiwo* 習氣我), "the conventional self" (*suishi liubu wo* 隨世流布我), "the free and sovereign self" (*zizai wo* 自在我), and "the true self." The "self of latent karmic impressions" refers to the self that is created from impressions planted in the *ālaya* consciousness that later manifest when the appropriate causes and conditions arise. The concept of "latent karmic impressions" has its genesis in Yogacara Buddhism. The "free and omnipotent self" refers to

> the ability of a buddha to function throughout the universe in any way without impediment. For example, a buddha has all kinds of "supernatural powers," such as knowing the past and future, reading minds, etc. But in Buddhism, the reason such "powers" are possible is not because of the development of great personal power on the part of a buddha, but because of his/her realization of the world to be completely interpenetrated. Thus, the unhindered function of a buddha is nothing other than an expression of the reality of the universe. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 11 November 2001.

Finally, the "true self" is said to possess the characteristics of constancy (*chang* 常), joy (*le* 樂), selfhood (*wo* 我), and purity (*jing* 淨).

[127] *Guode* can literally be translated as "merit contained in the result" or "fruitional qualities." It usually refers to the "meritorious virtues" (*gongde* 功德) of attainment that result from cultivation. Moreover, it can refer to the "numberless virtues" of the Buddha, or more specifically to the "four virtues," which

possess the Buddha Nature. Yinshun points out that the *tathāgatagarbha* theory shares similarities with other Buddhist doctrines that likewise espouse an inherent aspect possessed by sentient beings which provides the impetus for cultivating practices important for the attainment of enlightenment. Teachings explicating the concepts of *bodhi* and *bodhicitta* are among such doctrines. For example, when the "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter" of the *Huayan Sūtra* discusses the concept known as "the tathāgata responding to the mind of perfect, supreme, enlightenment," it points out that the Tathāgata's wisdom (*rulai zhihui* 如來智慧) resides in the "continuous mind of sentient beings" (*zhongshengxin xiangxu* 衆生心相續). Furthermore, the gold and jewel metaphors of the "ten stages" chapter elucidate the notion that the *bodhicitta* dwells inherently within sentient beings in a pure and unadulterated state. The doctrines associated with *bodhi* and *bodhicitta* found in the *Huayan Sūtra* not only share similarities with *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, but also have contributed significantly to its development.

3.3.1. *BODHICITTA* AND *BODHI*

Before turning to Yinshun's treatment of bodhicitta and bodhi, a brief introduction to the meaning of the two concepts is in order. *Bodhicitta* is a technical term found in Buddhist Sanskrit literature. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the term plays an important role within the context of the bodhisattva path, a spiritual practice that the

include constancy, joy, selfhood, and purity—the characteristics often associated with the *tathāgatagarbha*. The latter interpretation seems more appropriate given that Yinshun has already mentioned the relationship between three very similar characteristics—constancy, permanence, and existence—and the *tathāgatagarbha*. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 11 November 2001.

practitioner follows wherein he progressively works through a series of stages until full enlightenment is finally attained. *Bodhicitta* is actually a compound consisting of the words *bodhi* and *citta*, two important technical terms in Buddhist literature that have had a variety of interpretations. In Buddhism, *bodhi* refers to the state of being a Buddha, or the quality by which one is a Buddha. In general, the term has the meaning of "perception," "knowledge," or "wisdom." Taking into consideration both of these contexts, scholars have often translated *bodhi* into English as "enlightenment" or "awakening." According to Yinshun, *bodhi*, also known as unsurpassed *bodhi*, is the resultant wisdom of the Tathāgata. He points out that in pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism, *bodhi*, being the consequence of cultivation, is considered a conditioned (*youwei*) dharma.[128] That is like all other dharmas, enlightenment is dependent upon causes and conditions for its genesis, especially those associated with Buddhist practice.[129] *Citta* has been translated variously as "mind," "thought," and "attention," as well as "desire," "intention," and "aim." The compound *bodhicitta* has also been rendered into European languages in many ways, the most representative perhaps being "mind of enlightenment" and "aspiration for enlightenment."[130]

Intimately associated with this "aspiration for enlightenment" is compassion (*karuṇā*). The bodhisattva, for whom the generation of *bodhicitta* is the first step on the

[128] "Conditioned dharmas" indicate the various manifest phenomena that are created from a series of causes and conditions. Such dharmas are dependently originated—that is, their existence is dependent upon an infinite variety of factors. The teaching of the conditioned arising of dharmas points out that no "thing" can exist independently and permanently. In terms of praxis, it is used to discourage practitioners from becoming attached to "things." According to Yinshun, those who profess the Śrāvaka dharma believe that even enlightenment arises conditionally. Ibid.
[129] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 104.
[130] Francis Brassard, *The Concept of Bodhicitta in Santideva's Bodhicaryavatara* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 7.

path to Buddhahood, vows to help all sentient beings attain enlightenment, working ceaselessly over lifetimes if necessary to deliver them from greed, hatred, and ignorance, the roots of all suffering. The arousal of the *bodhicitta* results from a profound compassion for the suffering of others. Generating this compassion and the subsequent awakening of the "mind of enlightenment" is understood in Mahāyāna Buddhism as a life-transforming experience that changes how a being views and interacts with the world. However, such an experience does not occur easily and requires cultivation that may take lifetimes to perfect. For example, certain Tibetan traditions of Buddhism have an elaborate series of meditations that the practitioner must implement as aids to establishing compassion and producing *bodhicitta*.[131] Moreover, before *bodhicitta* can arise, the adept must have already generated a "store" of merit that has accumulated over lifetimes: "Moral merit must be stored up in order to germinate later into the great overshadowing tree of the Bodhicitta."[132]

In his discussion of the relationship between *bodhicitta* and the *tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun explains that Mahāyāna Buddhism describes two types of *bodhicitta*: the conventional and the ultimate. Conventional *bodhicitta* has a conative connotation, emphasizing the importance of effort or striving in the pursuit of enlightenment. In this context, Mahāyāna Buddhism defines *bodhicitta* as the mind which actively seeks to obtain the Buddha's awakening. Therefore, the notion of "arousing the *bodhicitta*" refers to the importance of arousing the intention to attain enlightenment. As an example,

[131] For more details regarding these meditations see Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 199-202.
[132] Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider & Company, 1958), 206.

Yinshun indicates that in the first abode of the "ten abodes" (*shizhu* 十住) theory,[133] known as the "abode of the arousal of the *bodhicitta*" (*faxinzhu*發心住), generating the *bodhicitta* signifies resolutely aspiring to omniscience (*yiqie zhi*一切智)[134] and willfully seeking the Buddha's way: "Arousing the great vow and willfully seeking the way of the Buddha is the original meaning of *bodhicitta*."[135] Here, Yinshun delineates conventional *bodhicitta* into two aspects —the "aspiring" and the "engaging" *bodhicittas*. In doing so, he follows traditional Mādhyamika interpretations espoused by such thinkers as the eighth century Indian commentator, Kamalaśīla who writes:

> Now this intention is the initial yearning for Buddhahood: "Oh, that I might be a Buddha, for the sake of all beings!" And the setting forth [engaging] is the actual making of a vow to become a Buddha, and the actual accumulation of the stocks of merit and knowledge.[136]

Here, Kamalaśīla states that conventional *bodhicitta* refers to the initial desire to become a Buddha as well as to the practice of those activities that will effect one's enlightenment.

Developing an urgent desire for enlightenment makes its accomplishment possible: "The motive determined the course, character, and power of the conduct. The desire for enlightenment intensely stirred meant, indeed, that the greater and more difficult part of the work was already achieved."[137] Thus, *bodhicitta* is more than a simple wish for enlightenment. It is a strong yearning that functions as the initial cause for the

[133] The teaching of the "ten abodes" appears earlier than that of the "ten Stages" discussed above (see Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 104). For a list and explanation of the "ten abodes" see Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 11 November 2001.
[134] "Omniscience," literally, "all-knowledge" (Skt. *sarvajñatā*) refers to the knowledge of things possessed by a Buddha. It does not mean that a Buddha knows every separate thing individually, but rather that he has fully grasped the fundamental principle of all things—of existence as a whole. For further discussion see Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, 207.
[135] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 105.
[136] Quoted by Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 204.

attainment of enlightenment. It manifests practically as the commitment to and practice of the path for achieving that goal.[138]

However, as the Mahāyāna tradition developed, the term came to mean not only the wish for enlightenment, but also "self-awakening" (*puti de zijue* 菩提的自覺) in which a small part of the Buddha's wisdom emerges.[139]

3.3.2. *BODHICITTA*, *BODHI*, AND THE DOCTRINE OF EMPTINESS

In the previous chapter, we encountered the *Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*'s (*Xiaopin bore*) claim that because "the mind is no mind, therefore, the mind's nature is originally pure."[140] The *Dapin bore* develops this idea further, according to Yinshun, in its discussions of the *bodhicitta*, the unequaled mind (*wu dengdeng xin*), and the excellent mind (*guangda xin*),[141] indicating that not only is the original nature pure (*ben xingjing*), but the original *bodhicitta* is pure as well. Yinshun notes, too, that the

[137] Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, 166.
[138] Brassard, *The Concept of Bodhicitta*, 20. For a summary of Suzuki's views on *bodhicitta*, see Ibid., 18-22.
[139] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 105.
[140] Gareth Sparham in his article, "Indian Altruism: A Study of the Terms *bodhicitta* and *cittotpāda*" explains *citta* in this passage as follows:

> The A [the *Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*] says of citta that it is *a-citta* (absence of mind) because the fundamental nature of *citta* is clear illumination (*prakṛtiścitasyaprabhāsvarā*). And it says of this mind, which is an absence of mind, that it is *avikāra* (unmodified) and *avikalpa* (without conceptualization).

For more details see Gareth Sparham, "Indian Altruism: A Study of the Terms *bodhicitta* and *cittotpāda*," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15, no 2 (1992), 229.
[141] Also the vast mind (Skt. *udāra-citta*). *Guangda xin* is also a reference to the possession of the four immeasurable minds (*siwuliangxin* 四無量心) which include the immeasurable mind of love (Skt. *maitri*; Chn. *ciwuliang* 慈無量), compassion (Skt. *karuna*; Chn. *beiwuliang* 悲無量), sympathetic joy (Skt. *mudita*; Chn. *xiwuliang* 喜無量), and impartiality (Skt. *upekśa*; Chn. *shewuliang*捨無量). These four immeasurable minds are four kinds of meditation that give bliss to and eliminate the suffering of sentient beings. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.

Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras describe the originally pure *bodhicitta* as the ultimate *bodhicitta* (*shengyi puti* 勝義菩提), distinguishing it from its mundane counterpart, namely, the vow to seek omniscience. Thus, here, *bodhi* in the compound *bodhicitta* should be understood as the perfection of wisdom that transcends all conceptualization and is thereby indistinguishable from the ultimate:

> The first part of the compound *bodhi-citta*. . .should be understood not as referring to a for-others state of enlightenment (a *saṃbhoga-kāya*) but to the Prajñā-pāramitā herself, beyond all conceptualization and absorbed indivisibly with the ultimate.[142]

Keeping in mind, also, the *Xiaopin bore*'s interpretation of mind or *citta* as inherently pure, the compound *bodhicitta* should then be read as the perfect and pure wisdom of the mind.[143]

Returning to the *Huayan Sūtra*, Yinshun contends that its "Ten Stages Chapter" indicates that the ultimate *bodhicitta* refers both to the mind's pure nature and the original manifestation of the Buddha's *bodhi* that gradually reveals itself as luminous purity.[144] Before it manifests, however, the *bodhicitta* lies dormant within the practitioner, remaining undisturbed by his affective and intellectual defilements. D. T. Suzuki clarifies this point as follows: "The intrinsic nobility of the Bodhicitta can never be defamed even when it is found among defilements of every description, whether they belong to knowledge or deeds or passions."[145] The "Ten Stages Chapter" uses the gold

[142] Sparham, "Indian Altruism," 229-230.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 105.
[145] Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, 206.

and jewel metaphors to exemplify the *bodhicitta*, thereby demonstrating that within sentient beings there exists the Buddha Nature (*foxing*), pure and unadulterated.

In the bodhisattva stages, enlightenment or *bodhi* is present within the practitioner from the beginning and remains there every step of the path. This view of *bodhi* and *bodhicitta* is very similar to the theory of the Tathāgata and the *tathāgatagarbha*. In fact, because many texts such as, for example, the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, describe the ultimate *bodhicitta* in language very similar to that used to discuss the *tathāgatagarbha*,[146] thinkers in later periods have equated the concepts of *bodhi* and *bodhicitta* with the *tathāgatagarbha*.

Yinshun indicates a number of texts that discuss the concepts of *bodhi*, *bodhicitta*, and the mind. In addition to the "Ten Stages Chapter" of the *Huayan Sūtra*, these include: Kumarajiva's *Sūtra of the Magnificent Bodhicitta* (*Zhuangyan putixin jing* 莊嚴菩提心經)[147], Kinkara's *The Sūtra of the Ten Stages of the Great and Broad Bodhisattvas* (*Dafangguang pusa shidi jing* 大方廣菩薩十地經), [148] Bodhiruci's *Dabaoji jing* 大寶積經, [149]as well as Paramartha's *Sūtra of Golden Luminosity* (*Jin guangming jing* 金光明經).[150] As if to undermine the tendency to hypostatize concepts

[146] For example, the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* describes the *bodhicitta* as "beyond this world, cannot be formulated by concept or speech, is extremely radiant, the image of the Ultimate, immaculate, unshakeable, and very bright like the steady glow of a lamp on a calm night." Translation taken from Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 203.
[147] T 307.10.961.
[148] T 308.10.963.
[149] Sanskrit: the *Mahā-ratnakūṭa-sūtra*, T 310.11.1-687.
[150] Sanskrit: the *Suvarna-prabhāsa-(uttama)-sūtra*. A text primarily regarded as a scripture for state protection, which offers a wide variety of instruction on Buddhist practices such as expression of faith and repentance, as well as basic doctrine, such as the five skandhas, dependent origination, emptiness and so forth. There are five Chinese translations, as well as various commentarial works available. These include the one by Dharmakṣema of the Northern Liang, entitled the *Jin guangming jing* (T 663.16.335-357, 4 fascicles in eight chapters); the one by Baogui 寶貴 et.al. of the Sui dynasty, entitled the *Hebu jin*

associated with the *tathāgatagarbha*. Yinshun quickly points out that all of these texts regard *bodhi*, the mind, and sentient beings as conventional designations that are empty of permanent, independent existence: "They say *bodhi*, the mind, sentient beings, and all dharmas are provisionally established names (*jiaming anli* 假名安立) and are not obtainable (*wusuode* 無所得)."[151] Thus, the word *bodhi* as a conventional designation does not exist in any permanent and unchanging form. Its provisional use serves an important purpose: it allows for discussion about enlightenment and how to cultivate it.

However, Yinshun explains that from the ultimate perspective *bodhi* essentially means inapprehensibility, indicating that the attainment of *bodhi* refers to the realization that all things are characterized by emptiness. In other words, in this case *bodhi* transcends provisional distinctions, is not subject to temporal designations such as past, present, and future, and thereby is synonymous with emptiness.

Bodhi, *bodhicitta*, sentient beings, and Buddhas all share the same nature—a nature that is both pure and empty. According to Yinshun, because sentient beings intrinsically have the same essence as the Buddhas, they are originally enlightened. Unfortunately, they do not know it yet—a condition over which many sutras such as the *Huayan Sūtra* lament. In order to help these beings awaken to their true nature, the Tathāgata, motivated by great compassion, teaches the dharma.

guangming jing (合部金光明經・ T 664.16.359-402; 8 fasc.); and the one by Yijing 義淨 of the Tang dynasty, entitled the *Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing* (金光明最勝王經・ T 665.16.403-457, 10 fascicles in 31 chapters). The merit of this sūtra is that wherever it is worshipped, the four guardian gods (*hu si wang* 護四王) will protect the state and benefit the people. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.

[151] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 106. *Wusuode* literally means "nothing to be attained," which can also be interpreted as "nothing to be attached to." It is a way of describing the character of enlightenment, which focuses on the lack of attachment and false discrimination in the mind. It is also a synonym for emptiness.

3.3.3. *BODHICITTA*, *BODHI*, AND THE JEWEL METAPHOR

The "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter," the "Ten Stages Chapter," and the "Vairocana Chapter" of the *Huayan Sūtra*, advocates of the "true self" school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, often refer to the section of the *Daji Sutra* that discusses the jewel metaphor in order to support their views of the *tathāgatagarbha*. However, unlike the above three chapters which focus on the jewel in the metaphor as a symbol for the *bodhicitta* intrinsic to all beings, this *sūtra* utilizes the metaphor to elucidate the process of cultivation: "[the *Daji Sūtra* emphasizes the jewel metaphor] "from the perspective of the realm of sentient beings in which one completes the way of enlightenment and enters into the realm of the Tathagata."[152] The jewel metaphor, then, explains how the defiled being transforms itself into a Buddha. Yinshun writes: "From the ore, the jewels are collected. This [the ore] is like the 'realm of sentient beings not being luminously pure.' Through the practice of the Buddha Dharma, one completes the way of enlightenment and enters into the Buddha realm. This, then, is the jewel of luminous purity, the realm of sentient beings in which impurity has been separated from purity."[153] In the cultivation process, the practitioner eliminates defilements in order to manifest his inherent purity and thereby to realize that all along the Buddha realm already existed within him. Uncovering one's inherent enlightenment by removing one's defilements, Yinshun

[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid., 108.

contends, bears many similarities to the process by which to reveal the *tathāgatagarbha.*[154]

The jewel mined from ore symbolizes the way in which the inherent purity or original enlightenment found within all sentient beings appears. It also functions as a metaphor for the *tathāgatagarbha*. However, in his interpretation of the *Daji Sūtra*, for example, in his discussion of the sixteen characteristics of *bodhi*, we again discover Yinshun's tendency to favor emptiness doctrine as the definitive expression of truth. He suggests that the sūtra, by means of the jewel metaphor, utilizes such concepts as intrinsic purity, original enlightenment, and the *tathāgatagarbha* as alternative references for emptiness. Through cultivation, emptiness is uncovered as the underlying truth shared universally by all living entities whether they are Buddhas or unenlightened beings.

Yinshun mentions this *sūtra* in his treatment of the *tathāgatagarbha* in order to demonstrate the important role it has played in the development of the theory. He of course recognizes the similarities between the function of the jewel metaphor in the *Daji Sūtra* and its use by proponents of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. However, advocates of the "True Self" school of Buddhism have utilized the sūtra to advance their interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha*, an interpretation which has led to the hypostatization of the concept. In response to this interpretation, at the end of his analysis of the sutra, Yinshun makes it clear that the emptiness teachings of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* were prevalent before the *Daji Sūtra* became popular, thereby establishing the primacy and authority of the Perfection of Wisdom teachings. By doing so, he establishes the doctrine

[154] In fact, Yinshun regards the process of uncovering one's inherent enlightenment outlined in the *Daji*

of emptiness as the primary purport of the Buddha Dharma, undermining the ultimate authority of any ideas in the *Daji Sūtra* that one could construe as supporting a view of the *tathāgatagarbha* as a permanent, unchanging fundament. Yinshun, then, utilizes the doctrine of emptiness to interpret the concepts found in the *Daji Sūtra*.

Sūtra as being "completely the same as the *tathāgatagarbha* theory." Ibid.

3.4. THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA SŪTRA*

The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* is a very short, but extremely influential text in Mahāyāna Buddhism which established the *tathāgatagarbha* theory as an important concept in Mahāyāna doctrine. It most likely was composed around the third century CE and thereafter transmitted to China in the same century. According to Yinshun, Sengyou's 僧祐[155] *Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka* (出三藏記集 *Chu Sanzang Jiji*) states that at the time of Jin Huidi 晉惠帝 (290-306 CE),[156] the monk Fazhu 法矩 translated the *Great and Universal Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (Skt. *Mahavaipulya Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*; Chn. 大方等如來藏經 *Dafangdeng Rulaizang jing*), which is called in the *Old Records* (舊錄 *Jiulu*), the *Sūtra of the Universal Buddhagarbha* (佛藏方等 *Fozang fangdengjing*). Yinshun argues that the transmission to China of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* occurred at about the same time as the Huayan sect's *Rulai xingxianjing* (如來興顯經)[157], the *Jianbei yiqie zhide jing* (漸備一切智德經)[158] translated by Dharmarakṣa, and the Great Collection Sect's 大集部 *Da ai jing* (大哀經). Based on the dates of these latter texts, he places the appearance of the *sūtra* at around 250 CE. The original *text* of the translation attributed to Fazhu is no longer extant. The versions that still exist include both Buddhabhadra's

[155] Sengyou (445-518 CE) is one of the earliest catalogers of the Chinese Tripitaka. His major work was entitled, *A Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka.* Sengyōu completed his catalog shortly before his death, compiling an extensive list based on the earlier catalogs available to him at the time as well as on his own research. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.
[156] Second emperor of the Western Jin (265-316 CE).
[157] A translation of the "Tathāgata's Nature Origination Chapter" 如來性起品 of the *Huayan Sutra* which circulated as a separate text by the name of *Rulai xingxianjing* (Skt. *Tathāgatatotpattisambhava-nirdeśa*). T. no 291. See Gregory, *Sinification of Buddhism*, 166, footnote 36.
[158] A translation of the "Ten Stages Chapter" 十地品 of the *Huayan Sutra.* This chapter circulated as a separate text not only as the *Jianbei yiqie zhide jing* (T. no. 285, 10.458), but also as the *Ten Stages Sutra*

Eastern Jin translation entitled the *Great and Universal Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* and Amoghavajra's Tang dynasty translation called the *Great and Broad Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (大方廣如來藏經, *Dafangguang Rulaizangjing*).[159]

The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* inherits its basic ideas from the *Huayan Sūtra*. Yinshun indicates the relationship between the content of the *Huayan Sūtra* and that of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* by pointing out the similarities between the Huayan and *tathāgatagarbha* metaphors that describe that aspect of the ultimate that exists within all sentient beings. Specifically, he compares the Huayan image of seeds which are already present in the flower before it blooms and the *tathāgatagarbha* image of "conjured Buddhas" (*huafo* 化佛) seated within the lotus flower buds. He quotes the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, which states, "There appeared in the sky a countless number of thousand-petaled lotus flowers...In the center of each flower was a conjured image of a buddha."[160] Yinshun argues that these two images share the same intended meaning: just as seeds already exist in the flower before it blooms and just as fully enlightened buddhas exist in the lotus flowers miraculously displayed by Sakyamuni Buddha, within each and every sentient being, despite his/her defilements, there exists a Buddha.

十地經 (T. no. 287, 10.535) and Kumārajīva's translation entitled the *Ten Abidings Sutra* 十住經 (T. no. 286, 10.497). Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 100.

[159] More specifically, Buddhabhadra's translation (T. No. 666, 16.457a-460b) was completed during the second year of Emperor Gongdi's 恭帝 reign known as the Xiyuan 熙元 period (420 CE). Amoghavajra's text (T. No. 667, 16.460) was composed sometime between the fifth year of Emperor Xuanzong's 玄宗 Tianbao 天寶 reign period (746 CE) and the sixth year of Emperor Daizong's 代宗 Dali 大歷 reign period (771 CE). Though Amoghavajra's version contains more details, the two translations share much in common. Finally, a word about the different titles of the two texts is in order. Both *fangdeng* and *fangguang* translate the Sanskrit word *vaipulya*, which means extension, spaciousness, widespread—ideas that are expressed by both of the Chinese terms, *guang* and *deng*. *Guang* specifically denotes something that is broad and widespread, as opposed to narrow and restricted while *deng* indicates that which is everywhere and universal. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.

[160] Grosnick, "Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra," 94.

While we can understand the connection that Yinshun makes between these two metaphors and even can agree with him on their shared meaning, we must also note that they do not make exactly the same point. As a metaphor for the innate Buddha, the image of the seeds within the flower suggests that the Buddha exists *in potentia* within sentient beings. With proper attention, this potential will develop into the perfected state, Buddhahood, at a future time just as a seed takes time to grow into a fully developed plant capable of producing flowers. However, the image of the "conjured buddhas" inside lotus flowers implies that from the beginning the buddha exists within beings in an already complete and perfected state. The ramifications of holding either one of these views directly impact religious praxis. The former image requires that the practitioner cultivate his/her potential for enlightenment, helping it grow into fruition, while the latter suggests that the adept must uncover the perfection that already lies within him/herself. We will see that this dichotomy between potential and already perfected Buddhahood appears in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* itself, namely in the context of the nine metaphors, which make up the majority of the sutra.

Yinshun continues to emphasize the connection between the *Huayan Sūtra* and the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* by noting that many of the nine metaphors have their genesis in the *Huayan Sūtra* or texts which are related to it, such as the *Ratnakūta Sūtra*

(大寶積經 *Da baoji jing*)[161] and the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (佛說十地經 *Foshuo shidi jing*).[162] He lists the metaphors as follows:

1. a withering flower having a Buddha
2. a swarm of bees surrounding honey
3. a kernel of wheat that has not yet had its husk removed
4. genuine gold in a filthy, impure place
5. impoverished family [living over] a cache of treasure
6. within the mango there is the seed
7. a gold statue in a worn-out (decrepit, corrupt) thing
8. a poor woman giving birth to a *cakravartin*
9. a gold statue within a cast model [163]

Among these nine, the first, which we have already mentioned above, is the fundamental metaphor for the *tathāgatagarbha*. Because it is an archetypal example that succinctly explicates the meaning of this term as it is used in the *sūtra*, I will quote it more fully here:

> The Buddha said, "Good sons, there is a comparison that can be drawn between the countless flowers conjured up by the Buddha that suddenly withered and the innumerable conjured buddha images with their many adornments, seated in lotus position within flowers, who cast forth light so exceedingly rare that there was no one in the assembly who did not show reverence. In a similar fashion, good sons, when I regard all beings with my buddha eye, I see that hidden within the kleśas of greed, desire, anger, and stupidity there is seated augustly and unmovingly the tathāgata's body. Good sons, all beings, though they find themselves with all sorts of

[161] T 310.11.1-687, 120 fascicles. Abbreviated *Baojijing* 寶積經. This text is a collection of forty-nine Mahāyāna sutras of which thirty-six were translated and collated with various previous translations by Bodhiruci and others between 706 and 713 CE. They were supposedly based on sermons given by the Buddha at 49 assemblies. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.
[162] T 287, 10.535a-573. 9 fascicles. Abbreviated *Shidi jing* 十地經. This text was translated by Śīladharma 尸羅達摩 and Dharmarakṣa 竺法護. It is a chapter of the *Huayan Sūtra* which became so popular that it was translated into Chinese and circulated as a separate *sūtra*. It gives an in-depth explanation of the ten stages (*bhūmi*) of the bodhisattva's progress. See also T 278, 279, 285, 286. Ibid.
[163] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 112. The translation for the third metaphor taken from Grosnick, "Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra," 97.

> kleśas, have a tathāgatagarbha that is eternally unsullied, and that is replete with virtues no different from my own.[164]

Despite later interpretations of this concept that tend to be highly philosophical in nature, the *sūtra* describes in a simple way the notion, found also in the *Huayan Sūtra*, that all sentient beings have within them the virtues and wisdom of the Buddha. However, most do not realize that they have them because these attributes remain covered by defilements such as greed, hatred and lust. When these obstructions are removed, the *sūtra* proffers, then the latent Buddhahood within will be made manifest.[165]

In discussing the other metaphors, Yinshun indicates their appearance in both the *Ratnakūta Sūtra* and the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*. He specifically notes that the metaphor of the "poor woman giving birth to a cakravartin" appears in the *Ratnakūta Sūtra* whereas the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* contains four of the nine metaphors, namely the "genuine gold in a impure place," "impoverished family [living over] a cache of treasure," "a gold statue in a worn-out and decrepit thing," and "a gold statue within a cast model." As for the other three metaphors, namely, the bee and honey, kernel of wheat, and mango pit metaphors, they are unique to the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. All of the metaphors symbolize the idea that sentient beings have within them the pure and marvelous Tathāgata though the realization of this fact is obstructed by the sufferings and passions in life. However, Yinshun argues that the metaphors do not function to do more than merely state that the Tathāgata exists inherently within all beings. That is, they do not contain an image, such as the smelting process utilized to extract gold from ore, that

[164] Grosnick, "Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra," 96.
[165] Ibid., 92.

indicates a procedure for eliminating the external defilements which obscure one's intrinsic Buddhahood. Yinshun writes:

> "[the metaphors] only express that the Tathāgata originally exists. They do not have the meaning of what the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* calls "smelting" (*yelian* 冶鍊)...later *sastra* masters, chiefly [those of] the *Ratnagotravibhāga* explain that that which the nine kinds of afflictions defile is the *tathāgatagarbha*. Nevertheless, the shared meaning of the nine metaphors is that within the defiled body of sentient beings, a pure Tathagata exists.[166]

Though Yinshun argues that the nine metaphors make the same point, that within the defiled bodies of sentient beings there exists a Tathāgata, upon closer analysis, we can discover some subtle differences in meaning among them. Most of the metaphors indicate that the Tathāgata already exists in a complete and perfected state within each being. However, "the impoverished woman giving birth to a king" and "the mango pit" metaphors suggest that the Tathāgata has to evolve into a perfected state over time, just as the embryo in the woman takes many years to develop into a king and the mango pit takes even longer to grow into a tree:

> The conjured buddhas within the lotus flowers are already fully enlightened, the hone and the what kernel are already edible, the gold in the waste pit is already pure and in no need of refinement, and the golden statues are already fully cast whereas, by contrast, it wil take many years for the embryo in the poor woman's womb to become a world conqueror, and more years still for the mango pit to become a full-grown tree.[167]

[166] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 112.
[167] Grosnick, "Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra," 93.

Despite the nuances in meaning that distinguish some of the metaphors, we know that the primary purport of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* is that all sentient beings possess within them the precious *tathāgatagarbha*. But that they possess it does not tell us how they possess it. To answer the question of how the *tathāgatagarbha* exists within sentient beings, Yinshun returns to the *sūtra*. In it, he finds that having the *tathāgatagarbha* means that sentient beings have the Tathāgata's wisdom, insight (*zhijian* 知見), power (*li* 力), and fearlessness (*wusuowei* 無所畏) within them as well. From this standpoint, the *tathāgatagarbha* appears to be representative of certain attributes that, though they are symbolic of the ultimate,[168] are not tangible substances but rather attitudes or states of mind. In this way, the *tathāgatagarbha* seems much like *bodhi* in that it is a quality of the Tathāgata—a quality that sentient beings possess.

A problem arises, however, in understanding the *sūtra's* statement that "...within the kleśas of greed, desire, anger, and stupidity there is seated augustly and unmovingly...the tathāgata's body."[169] Yinshun recognizes that some practitioners have interpreted the phrase, "the tathāgata's body" literally. According to this interpretation, all beings have seated within them a physical entity called the Buddha. In this context, Yinshun mentions the similar view espoused in the *Laṇkāvatāra Sūtra*, which states that "the *tathāgatagarbha*'s nature is pure. It becomes the thirty-two marks and enters into the bodies of all sentient beings."[170] Thus, to say that all beings have the *tathāgatagarbha* is to say that they literally have within them a Buddha complete with the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor marks. Because when taken literally it

[168] What Yinshun calls "*nirvāṇa* of quiescence" (*miaoji de niepan* 妙寂的涅槃). Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 112.

advocates that a real Buddha lives inside of each person. this view shares similarities with non-Buddhist teachings that advocate the existence of an *ātman* or self. and thereby seems antithetical to the basic Buddhist doctrines of no-self and emptiness. Yinshun comments: "[N]o wonder the *Laṇkāvatāra Sūtra* raises the doubts of common people [who query]: Is not the *tathāgatagarbha* the same as the *ātman* of the heterodox paths?"[171]

The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* contains the idea that "all sentient beings similarly have the Tathāgata's wisdom and virtuous marks."[172] The nine metaphors found in this sūtra popularized the notion among the common people that all living entities have within them a seated Buddha. Yinshun points out that for many people believing that they have within them a ready-made Buddha complete with the thirty-two magnificent marks provides them with the confidence that they, with diligent effort, can attain liberation. Therefore, though *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine may appear similar to the *ātman* doctrines of non-Buddhist schools. instead it serves as an expedient means. helping people to overcome their fears of emptiness and their concerns about being incapable of attaining enlightenment. Thus. Yinshun writes, "For the popularization of Buddhism and for the transformation of those stuck in samsara. the validity of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory has power that is not easy to ignore."[173]

[169] Grosnick. "Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra." 96.
[170] Quoted in Yinshun. *Rulaizang*, 112. The quote comes from T 670.16.489a.
[171] Ibid., 112-113.
[172] Ibid., 113.
[173] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* AS THE WOMB OF THE TATHĀGATA: YINSHUN'S EXPLANATION

In the last chapter, we have seen that in Chapter Four of *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha* Yinshun discusses the Mahāyāna scriptural sources such as *The Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* and the *Huayan Sūtra* that espouse ideas very similar to the *tathāgatagarbha*, arguing that they represent an important step in the evolution of the concept. He concludes the chapter by elucidating the nine metaphors for the *tathāgatagarbha* found in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, one of the earliest presentations of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine and therefore a foundational text in the formulation of the basic purport of the doctrine.

The *tathāgatagarbha* theory in the third century CE taught that the *tathāgatagarbha* exists within the bodies and minds of sentient beings. By this time, proponents of the theory defined the *tathāgatagarbha* as "the womb (*taizang* 胎藏) of the Tathāgata" that functions as the causal condition (*yinwei* 因位) for praxis. Therefore, it served as the means by which sentient beings could practice and ultimately attain enlightenment. The practical import of this teaching, Yinshun indicates, lies in the ease with which the common person could readily understand it, and therefore with confidence embark on the Buddhist path.

This chapter presents Yinshun's explication of seven texts during this period of the development of *tathāgatagarbha* ideology which advocated the idea that all sentient

beings originally possess the essential nature of the tathāgata (*zhongsheng benyou rulai tixing* 衆生本有如來體性). He lists the seven as follows, describing both the doctrinal basis and intent of each:

1. *The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*—including both the Jin dynasty version translated by Buddhabhadra and the Tang dynasty version translated by Amoghavajra.[174] As we have seen, this text derives much of its content from the metaphors and teachings of the *Huayan Sūtra*. It emphasizes that the terms *Buddhadhātu* (*foxing* 佛性), *Buddhagarbha* (*fozang* 佛藏), and *tathāgatadhātu* (*rulaixing* 如來性) have fundamentally the same meaning.

2. *The Nirvana Sūtra*—both the six fascicle version translated by the Jin dynasty monk Faxian and the ten fascicle version translated by the Northern Liang monk Dharmakṡema.[175] The doctrinal content of the *Nirvana Sūtra* emphasizes the tathāgata's *parinirvana*. Permanently residing in nirvana (*rulai changzhu daban niepan* 如來常住大般涅槃), the Buddha is available to sentient beings as an aid to the cultivation of the Buddhist path in the form of the Buddha Nature that exists within them—also known as the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha* (*rulaizangwo* 如來藏我).

[174] *Dafangguang rulaizangjing* 大方廣如來藏經. The Amoghavajra's version can be found in T.667.16.460b-468a and Buddhabhadra's version can be found in T.666.16.457a-460b.
[175] Translated between the years 416 and 418CE, Faxian's version (translated with Buddhabhadra), titled in Chinese as the *Daban nihuan jing* 大般泥洹經 can be found in T 376.12.853-899. The *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經, translated between 416 and 423CE, can be found in T 374.12.365c-603c. Muller, "Digital

3. The seven fascicle version of the *Great Cloud Sūtra*, also known as the *Dafangdeng Wuxiang Sūtra* translated by Dharmarakṣa. This scripture emphasizes not only that all sentient beings possess the Buddha Nature, but that they likewise possess the Buddha's four virtures—permanence (*chang* 常), bliss (*le* 樂), selfhood (*wo* 我), and purity (*jing* 淨).

4. The two fascicle *Great Dharma Drum Sūtra* translated by Gunabhadra. *The Great Dharma Drum Sūtra* conveys the story of Prasenajit 波斯匿王 [176]who struck his drum in order to see the Buddha. To stress the equality of the tathāgata realm and the realm of sentient beings, it demonstrates that all living entities possess the *tathāgatagarbha*, that they have one nature (*yixing* 一性), and that they are a part of one vehicle (*yisheng* 一乘).

5. The four fascicle *Aṇgulimālya Sūtra* translated by Gunabhadra. This sūtra tells the story of Aṇgulimālya grasping a sword and injuring the Buddha. It underscores the notion that all sentient beings possess the permanent and unchanging (*bubian* 不變) womb of the tathāgata. Moreover, it equates the realm of sentient beings (*zhongshengjie* 衆生界), the realm of the self (*wojie* 我界), and the *tathāgatagarbha*.

Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001. Yinshun gives the Sanskrit for Tan Wuchen 曇無讖as Dharmarakṣa, but in fact it is Dharmakśema.

[176] King Prasenajit lived in Śrāvastī of Kosala, and happened to be born the same year as Śākyamuni Buddha. Together with his wife and son (the crown prince Jeta), he became an important lay member of the early sangha. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.

6. The two fascicle *Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā Sūtra* translated by Guṇabhadra.[177] This important Mahāyāna scripture discusses the relationship between the mind consciousness (*xinshi* 心識) and the *tathāgatagarbha*. It argues that the original nature of the mind is pure, without pollutants. Furthermore, it establishes the concepts of the "empty *tathāgatagarbha* (Skt. *śūnyatathāgatagarbha*; Chn. *kong rulaizang* 空如來藏) and the non-empty *tathāgatagarbha* (Skt. *aśūnyatathāgatagarbha*; Chn. *bukong rulaizang* 不空如來藏).

7. The one fascicle *Sūtra of No Increase and No Decrease* translated by Bodhiruci.[178] This text discusses the relationship between the ultimate truth (Skt. *paramārthasatya*; Chn. *diyi yidi* 第一義諦), sentient beings, the *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmadhātu* as being one of equivalence within the medium of the *tathāgatagarbha*. The sutra states, "As for the deep meaning, it is the ultimate truth; as for the ultimate truth, it is the realm of sentient beings; as for the realm of sentient beings, it is the *tathāgatagarbha*; as for the *tathāgatagarbha*, it is the *dharmakāya*."[179] Just as with the *Aṅgulimālya Sūtra* and the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, the *Sūtra of No Increase and No Decrease* stresses that the self nature of the mind is pure (Skt. *cittaprakṛtiprabhāsvaratā*; Chn. *xin zixing qingjing* 心自性清淨).[180]

[177] *Shengman shizi hou yisheng da fangbian fangguang jing* 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經 T 353.12.217a-223b.
[178] *The Buzeng Bujian jing* 不增不減經 can be found in T 668.16.466-468.
[179] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 118. Also see T 668.16.467a.
[180] Note that Takasaki Jikido discusses all of these texts in his *Formation of Tathāgatagarbha Thought*. *The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, *The Sūtra of No Increase and No Decrease*, *Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā Sūtra*, *The Nirvana Sūtra*, and *The Aṅgulimālya Sūtra* are sutras well-known for their importance in the development of *tathāgatagarbha* thought. See Jikidō Takasaki, *Nyoraizō Shisō no Keisei: Indo Daijō*

Yinshun utilizes these texts in order to explain the relationship between the tathāgata and the *tathāgatagarbha*, the concept of the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha*, and the notion that the *tathāgatagarbha* is not empty. In the following, I will present Yinshun's discussion of these issues.[181]

Bukkyō Shisō Kenkyū 如來藏思想の形成：イ ト大乗佛教思想研究 (Tokyō: Shunjūnsha, 1974), 40-68, 69-96, 97-126, 128-190, and 191-233 respectively. Lesser known, but equally important are *The Great Dharma Drum Sūtra* and *The Great Cloud Sūtra*—see Ibid. 234-253 and 276-301 respectively.

[181] One should note here that before going on to take up these various issues, Yinshun describes the prophecy, attributed to Sakyamuni Buddha, of the child born to propagate the Buddha's teachings at a time when the Dharma was in a state of decline and the moral character of the Buddhist clergy was suspect. This prophecy appears in a number of the above *sūtras*. Despite the many theories as to who this person actually was (some say it was Nāgārjuna or Āryadeva while others insist that it was Mahākāśyapa), Yinshun believes that the story reflects the state of affairs in India at the time that many of these texts were written. Here is a case in which Yinshun utilizes the text for the purpose of understanding the historical context. Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 119-122.

4.1. TATHĀGATA AND *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* (*RULAI YU RULAIZANG* 同來與同來藏)

In this section, Yinshun discusses the role that the concept of the tathāgata played in the development of the *tathāgatagarbha* during what he calls the early period of the *tathāgatagarbha* teachings. He begins by noting a number of terms that serve as synonyms for the Ultimate: "the *tathāgata* (*rulai* 如來), *parinirvāṇa* (*ban niepan* 般涅槃), *vimukta* (*jietuo* 解脫), *dharmakāya* (*fashen* 法身), and *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi* (*wushang puti* 無上菩提) are all related in one lineage to the Buddha's fruit (*foguo* 佛果)."[182] The "Buddha's fruit" refers to the result of the Buddhist path, that is, it indicates Buddhahood or enlightenment. These terms describe truth from the perspective of awakening and thus represent the Ultimate.

Yinshun focuses his discussion on the *nirvāṇa* of the tathāgata, distinguishing it from the *nirvāṇa* taught by the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha vehicles. Some śrāvaka sects, such as the Sūtravādina, describe nirvana as being without form (*wuti* 無體) while others, like the Sarvāstivādiṇa, regard it as "unconditioned existence" (*wuweishifa* 無爲實法). Whether it is the śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, or bodhisattva vehicle, they all agree that nirvana is characterized by goodness and is a permanent condition. However, both the Sūtravādina and the Sarvāstivādina insist that when a tathāgata enters *nirvāṇa* he no longer possesses a body or wisdom and thus no longer participates in the activity of helping sentient beings along the path to enlightenment: "Although *nirvāṇa* is good and is permanent, the tathāgata which enters *nirvāṇa* has neither a body nor wisdom. It is

[182]Ibid., 124-125.

called 'the ashen body and extinguished wisdom (*huishen minzhi* 灰身泯智.' [Thus], the tathāgata no longer [engages in] the activity of benefiting sentient beings."[183] The *Āgamas* too support this view, making the point that Śākyamuni Buddha's body, being subject to impermanence, was cremated.

The Mahāsaṃghikạ sect, on the other hand, describes the tathāgata's body differently: "The tathāgata's body is truly without boundaries...the lives of all the Buddhas are also without boundaries."[184] Those who espouse this view do not regard the Buddha's body as subject to the limits of birth and death, but rather see it as remaining constant and unchanging. Such a view has important ramifications for one's practice, for it suggests that Buddhas are forever available to sentient beings as an aid in the cultivation of enlightenment. Yinshun points out that the *tathāgatagarbha* theory inherits this pre-Mahāyāna interpretation of the Buddha's body, combining it with concepts taken from the *Huayan Sūtra*. Moreover, the *tathāgatagarbha* texts contain many of the same metaphors found in the *Huayan Sūtra*, using them to explain that the tathāgata and its nirvana permanently abide (*changzhu* 常住), exist (*you* 有), and are not empty (*bukong* 不空). Yinshun suggests that this conception of the tathāgata and nirvana arose in reaction to the view held by the Sūtravādināh and the Sarvāstivādināh sects. This latter view, which stressed that the Buddha no longer existed in the world, was extremely difficult for the common person to understand and accept. On the contrary, the *tathāgatagarbha* view espouses a far more tangible Buddha who is forever present to benefit all beings—a conception that provides comfort and, as we will see later,

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[183] Ibid., 125.

approaches more closely to the religious *waultenschaung* held by the people of the Indian subcontinent.

Yinshun notes that the texts that espouse the *tathāgatagarbha* theory list four attributes of the tathāgata. These include permanence (*chang* 常), bliss (*le* 樂), selfhood (*wo* 我), and purity (*jing* 淨). The *Śrīmālā Sūtra* writes:

> When sentient beings have faith in the Tathāgata and those sentient beings conceive [him] with permanence, pleasure, self, and purity, they do not go astray. Those sentient beings have the right view. Why so? Because the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata has the perfection of permanence, the perfection of pleasure, the perfection of self, the perfection of purity. Whatever sentient beings see the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata that way, see correctly.[185]

Furthermore, according to Yinshun, the four characteristics signify a number of other attributes that are often applied to the tathāgata. For example, "permanence" represents "constancy" (heng 恒), "unchangeableness" (*bu bianyi* 不變易), "not growing old" (*bulao* 不老), and "not dying" (*busi* 不死); "bliss" corresponds to "peacefulness" (*an* 安), "joy" (*kuaile* 快樂), "cooling" (*qingliang* 清涼), and "ultimate quiescence (*ji jiqing* 極寂靜); and "purity" means "undefiled" (*wugou* 無垢).

Yinshun indicates that the four characteristics, known as the four inverted views (*diandao* 顛倒), appear in pre-Mahāyāna sources in which they have an entirely opposite meaning. In these sources, the four views constitute ignorance:

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[184] Ibid. Yinshun quotes from the *Yibuzong lunlun* 異部宗輪論 T. 49.15b-c.

> Beings suffered in samsara because they mistakenly grasped after what was impermanent as if it were permanent, what caused suffering as if it could lead to bliss, what lacked any substantial self as if had such a self, and what was impure as if it were pure.[186]

In this schema, liberation occurs when the practitioner realizes that all things are characterized by impermanence, suffering, no-self, and impurity. Any doctrine that attributed permanence, bliss, selfhood and purity to an aspect of reality was to be rejected as utterly false.[187] The *tathāgatagarbha* tradition accepts this interpretation of the four inverted views when it is applied to mundane existence. Conventionally constructed reality is impermanent, leads to suffering, lacks an identifiable self, and is impure. However, these attributes do not pertain to the ultimate, for the *dharmakāya* and the tathāgata represent the "perfection of permanence, the perfection of bliss, the perfection of self, and the perfection of purity."

In his explanation of these four characteristics as perfections, Yinshun focuses his attention on permanence and selfhood, dismissing the attributes of purity and bliss "as concepts easily understood by the common person." He begins his discussion by presenting the interpretations of permanence and impermanence held by pre-Mahāyāna sects. Proponents of the śrāvaka vehicle, he notes, teach that sentient beings are characterized by impermanence. They constantly change as they revolve through the cycle of birth and death. When one eliminates the various afflictions, he escapes from this cycle of rebirth and enters ultimate *nirvāṇa* (*jiujing niepan* 究竟涅槃), which is not

[185] Wayman, *The Lion's Roar*, 102. These four attributes are discussed in detail in both the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.
[186] Gregory, *Sinification of Buddhism*, 220.
[187] Ibid.

subject to the transformations that occur in birth and death. In this way, nirvana permanently abides (*niepan changzhu* 涅槃常住). However, advocates of Mahāyāna Buddhism understand nirvana from the perspective of the tathāgata. Permanence in this case has a more nuanced meaning. It refers to that which transcends time—past, present, and future. Although Mahāyāna texts use the phrase "benefiting sentient beings to the end of all time" (*jin weilai ji de liyi zhongsheng* 盡未來際的利益衆生)—a phrase which suggests that time flows from the past to the present and then to the future—in reality no time exists and thus there is no real change over time. Yinshun writes:

> What is "permanence?" "Permanence" transcends time. There is no time that can be spoken of. From [the notion of] benefiting sentient beings to the end of all time, although it appears as [if there is] the flowing of time, there is [in fact] no change [that occurs]. This is called permanence. For example, the *No Increase and No Decrease Sūtra* (*buzeng bujian jing* 不增不減經) says: "to the end of all time is the same as constancy and existence (*youfa* 有法)."[188]

Implied here is the idea that time and expressions of time operate in the context of the conventional world. In terms of Buddhist praxis, they function as expedient devices used for encouraging sentient beings along the path to enlightenment. The recognition of time allows practitioners to see and experience their own advancement as well as that of others, progressing from a state of delusion and ignorance to states of more enlightened understanding. However, from the perspective of the ultimate, because time does not exist, progressive change does not truly exist either.

[188] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 126.

The tathāgata, then, is permanent and eternal, remaining unaffected by conceptions of time. Hence, it is often described as having an "immeasurably long life" (*shouming wuliang* 壽命無量). Similarly, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* mentions the notion that the Buddha had for a long time already attained enlightenment, residing in nirvana for time immeasurable. Based on this idea, then, Sakyamuni long ago, even before his time in the saha realm, existed as a permanent body (*changshen* 常身). Though the important events in his life, such as his birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana, appeared to occur over time, in fact they were only expedient manifestations and thereby ultimately unreal. Moreover, the *Huayan Sūtra* argues that no difference exists between Sakyamuni Buddha, commonly viewed by pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist sects as a historical personage and Vairocana—the cosmic and eternal Buddha. Yinshun suggests that from these examples found in both the *Nirvana* and *Huayan Sūtras* we realize that Sakyamuni Buddha and the permanent and unchanging tathāgata are the same. He notes, too, that the eternal nature of the tathāgata functions ultimately not only as the underlying essence of Śākyamuni Buddha, but also as that of all the Buddhas as well as all sentient beings.

The question of the *tathāgatagarbha* being an *ātman* is related to the belief during the early development of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine that the *dharmakāya* and the tathāgata's *nirvāṇa* —both synonyms for the *tathāgatagarbha*—have a body. We encountered this view in our examination of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. Yinshun here examines it in more detail.

According to early *tathāgatagarbha* teachings, the permanently abiding and unchanging tathāgata applies not only to an unchanging principle (*lixing* 理性)[189] nor merely to the wisdom that one attains upon achieving enlightenment, but also to the bodily characteristics of the tathāgata—namely the immeasurable major and minor adornments (*wuliang xianghao zhuangyan* 無量相好). Since sentient beings possess within them the eternal tathāgata, they also possess, in addition to its wisdom and essence, its physical characteristics. To say that sentient beings possess the tathāgata's wisdom, essence, and physical characteristics is the same as saying that they have within them the *tathāgatagarbha*. Yinshun writes:

> The *tathāgatagarbha* teaching is the theory that the *dharmakāya* has a body. From [the perspective of] the unchanging, eternal, and permanent tathāgata, [the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching] discusses sentient beings' causal conditions (*yinwei* 因位); that is, the body of sentient beings possesses the *tathāgatagarbha*. The tathāgata's nirvana (or *dharmakāya*) has a body; thus, the *tathāgatagarbha*, of course, also possesses physical characteristics.[190]

The *tathāgatagarbha* within sentient beings serves as the causal condition for sentient beings' enlightenment. The body and wisdom of the tathāgata provide sentient beings with the means by which to attain liberation. According to *tathāgatagarbha* theory, without the "womb of the tathāgata," living entities would not have the ability to cultivate themselves. Knowing that the *tathāgatagarbha* exists within them gives practitioners

[189] The English translation of the term, *lixing*, is taken from Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.
[190] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 128.

confidence that they already possess the pure causes necessary for achieving Buddhahood.

For proponents of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, the *tathāgatagarbha*, as the tathāgata nature or Buddha Nature, represents that aspect of the Ultimate that exists in all living beings. It operates as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth. All other teachings are merely expedient means, "except for the permanently abiding, unchanging tathāgata and tathāgata nature (Buddha nature; Chn. *foxing* 佛性), the dharma which the Buddha discusses is an expedient means."[191] All of the Buddha's teachings are useful devices that aid the practitioner in uncovering his inherent Buddha Nature. The permanent and ubiquitous tathāgata with all of its major and minor marks serves both as the inspiration for self-cultivation and as the goal of realization. With the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, one now only has to look within to uncover her inherent enlightenment, instead of relying on causes external to the mind and body:

> "All sentient beings having the *tathāgatagarbha*" in theory indicates that sentient beings originally have the pure causes. . .In the cultivation process, it is not necessary to seek [enlightenment] outside. Rely on the three jewel natures of your own body—as for the tathāgata nature, cultivate it with effort to seek its true manifestation.[192]

[191] Ibid., 129.
[192] Ibid., 130.

4.2. THE SELFHOOD OF *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* (*RULAIZANGWO* 如來藏我)

Of the various virtues associated with the *tathāgatagarbha*, "selfhood" (*ātman*) presents a serious conundrum for the Buddhist tradition. From the period in which the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, lived and taught, the Buddhist tradition has always espoused the doctrine of no-self[193]—the view that a self, soul, or ego does not exist in any permanent and unchanging manner. According to this view, sentient beings are nothing but an amalgamation of the five aggregates.[194] No self obtains outside of these aggregates, which arise and perish from moment to moment. Because the aggregates constantly change in this way, one cannot find a permanently abiding "self" in any one of them nor in the composite of all of them together. The various schools that developed during the period of sectarian Buddhism (3rd to 1st centuries BCE) elaborated on this point, establishing it as the distinguishing feature that separated Buddhism from such heterodox teachings as, for example, those advocated by Brahmanical Sāṃkhya—a school of philosophy which espoused a form of "eternalism."

Before discussing the specific problem of "selfhood" and the *tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun first points out that the issue of "selfhood" does not originate with Mahāyāna Buddhism and the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine nor does it only arise in pre- Mahāyāna

[193] Yinshun points out that the no-self doctrine is one of the "three dharma seals" (*san fayin* 三法印) that differentiated Buddhism from other religious traditions of India. The classical statement of these three runs as follows: "all things are impermanent" (*zhuxing wuchang* 諸行無常), "all things lack inherent existence" (no-self—*zhufa wuwo* 諸法無我), and "nirvana is perfect quiescence" (*niepan jijing* 涅槃寂靜). Ibid., 132.

[194] *Wuyun* 五蘊. "Form" (Skt. *rūpa*; Chn. *se* 色) is matter in general, the body or materiality. "Feeling" (Skt. *vedanā*; Chn. *shou* 受) is receptive or sensory function. "Perception" (Skt. *samjñā*; *xiang* 想) refers to images that surface in the mind. "Impulse" (Skt. *samskāra*; Chn. *xing* 行) is will, intention, or the mental function that accounts for craving. 'Consciousness' (Skt. *vijñāna*; Chn. *shi* 識) is the cognitive, or discriminating function, i.e., knowing through discrimination. Taken from Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.

Buddhism as a point of contention between Buddhist sects and other religious traditions. In fact, this issue was hotly debated among various sects within Buddhism as early as the third century BCE, appearing most poignantly with the emergence of the controversial doctrine proffered by the followers of Vātsīputra (later known as the Vātsīputrīya school) which stated that the *ātman* or person did in some sense exist as a reality. The Vātsīputrīyas rejected the orthodox view of the no-self doctrine and the five aggregates and instead argued that though the "self" could not be found separate from the aggregates, it neither could be viewed as identical with them. Moreover, they argued that a predicate could not be assigned to the self. Therefore, one could not describe it as eternal or impermanent. Nonetheless, it could be cognized by the six kinds of consciousness (*liushi* 六識), and it alone transmigrated from one composite of the five aggregates to the next.[195]

Because of its view of the "person," this sect was later scorned for espousing non-Buddhist views. However, Yinshun notes that even this unorthodox sect rejected the Brahmanical concept of an eternal soul, advocating a "pseudo-self" in order to explain another conundrum in Buddhism, namely, the question of what is reborn from lifetime to lifetime. Yinshun writes:

> the Vātsīputrīya and the Samkrantivada established the *ātman*, discussing its purpose for the sake of establishing the continuity of birth and death and the connection [that allows one] to move from samsara to liberation. But it does not take "selfhood" as the true principle, as the content of liberation.[196]

[195] For more details regarding the Vātsīputrīya view of the "person," see A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), 234.
[196] Ibid.

Thus, the heretical Vatsiputriya sect disallows the view of a permanent, unchanging self, and regards its own view of "selfhood" as characteristic of how the *ātman* functions in *saṃsāra* and not in the state of liberation. In this way, even this school avoids the position, held by Brahmanical Sāṃkhya, that espouses the existence of an eternal *ātman*.

However, Yinshun recognizes that the "selfhood" of the *tathāgatagarbha* requires some explanation for it, at least superficially, shares many similarities with the doctrines advocated by non-Buddhist schools, especially those who derive their ideas from the appendix to the Vedic corpus known as the *Upaniṣads*. Though the texts which constitute this appendix are by no means homogenous in content, one can ascertain important philosophical trends that connect many of them together. The one most relevant to Yinshun's discussion and which deeply influenced the development of religious thought before and after the time of the Buddha is the belief in the essential unity of Brahman and *ātman*.

Brahman is the invisible but pervasive, generative, and connective force that binds the world into a single whole. Defined in terms of Vedic practices and beliefs, it is the hidden power of the cosmos which manifests as the efficacy of the Vedic rituals, the mystical force of the sounds that constitute the hymns utilized in the rituals, and the power and essence of the Vedic gods. As the sacred power of life itself, Brahman functions as the ontological ground of existence and thus is that by which all things arise and are sustained. *Ātman* is the self or soul—the living essence—of all sentient beings. The goal of liberation as presented in the *Upaniṣads* consists in the experiential

knowledge that *ātman* and Brahman are in reality identical and changeless. The *ātman* of each living entity is, from the ultimate perspective, nothing other than the single totality of all things, and therefore is eternal and all encompassing. Upon liberation, then, the practitioner realizes that he is indistinguishable from this underlying unity of things and that the appearance of change, multiplicity, and diversity in the world is merely an illusion.

According to Yinshun, those who championed the *tathāgatagarbha* theory discussed the virtue of selfhood in terms of the eight powers (*bazizai* 八自在), which included the powers of self-manifolding, infinite expansion, levitation and transportation, manifesting countless forms permanently in one and the same place, use of one physical organ in place of another, obtaining all things as if nothing, expounding a stanza through countless kalpas, and ability to traverse through the solid as space. Upon achieving Buddhahood, a being—a Buddha—realizes the virtue of selfhood and thus attains the eight powers. These powers demonstrate that Buddhas have the ability to function throughout the universe in any way without impediment. The reason a Buddha can perform such powers is not because he has developed great personal power, but because he has realized the world to be completely interpenetrated. Thus, the unimpeded function of a Buddha is only an expression of the reality of the universe.

Yinshun reminds us, however, that since all sentient beings, deluded or awakened, possess the *tathāgatagarbha*, they too have the characteristic of "selfhood" and thus the capacity to perform the eight powers. Furthermore, the tathāgata nature (Skt. *tathāgatadhātu*; Chn. *rulaixing*), another name for the ultimate reality that underlies all of

existence,[197] is equivalent to "selfhood" or *ātman*: "*tathāgatagarbha*, Buddha Nature, and the self are all the same. In conventional parlance, the self and sentient beings have the same meaning. Therefore, the realm of sentient beings and the *tathāgatagarbha* also have the same meaning."[198] The relationship between selfhood and the *tathāgatadhātu*, then, appears similar to the relationship between *ātman* and Brahman. Each sentient being possesses the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha* which is also an aspect of the ultimate, namely the tathāgata nature. A being's awakening consists in uncovering the already pure and enlightened nature and realizing that from the beginning one was already a Buddha. This view of enlightenment bears striking similarities with that of the *Upaniṣads* wherein the realization of the unity of *ātman* and Brahman results in liberation.

Yinshun further indicates the similarities of these views in his discussion of the relationship between ultimate reality expressed as the *dharmakāya*[199] and mundane reality defined as the realm of sentient beings. Quoting the *Nirvana Sūtra*, he argues that the *dharmakāya*, when understood from the mundane perspective, is nothing other than the realm of sentient beings; from the viewpoint of the bodhisattva, it is equivalent to the realm of the bodhisattvas; and from the standpoint of the fully enlightened after all the afflictions have been eradicated, it is called the realm of the tathāgata. No difference

[197] Yinshun notes that the term *foxing* 佛性 is the Chinese translation of *buddhagarbha* (*fozang* 佛藏) and *buddhadhātu* (*fojie* 佛界). Moreover, he points out that *buddhagarbha* and *tathāgatagarbha* as well as *buddhadhātu* and *tathāgatadhātu* have the same meaning. All of these terms serve as alternative expressions for ultimate reality. Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 133.

[198] Ibid.

[199] In general Mahāyāna teaching, the *dharmakāya*, literally translated as reality-body, is a name for ultimate existence—the true body of reality or Buddha as eternal principle. It often is used as a synonym for the *tathāgatagarbha*.

exists between sentient beings, bodhisattvas, and tathāgatas for all of them have as their essential characteristic the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha*.[200] Yinshun writes:

> It can be seen that the self (*wo* 我) and the realm of the self (*wojie* 我界), sentient beings and the realm of sentient beings, are all different names for the *tathāgatagarbha*, *tathāgatadhātu* (both *rulaijie* 女來界 and *rulaixing* 如來性), buddhagarbha (*fozang* 佛藏), and buddhadhātu (*foxing* 佛性).[201]

The equality of selfhood, sentient beings, and the *tathāgatagarbha* is the main purport of the *tathāgatagarbha* teachings. Selfhood, then, as both the *dharmakāya* and the realm of sentient beings, serves as the fundamental basis of nirvana and samsara—delusion and enlightenment—much as Brahman (and by extension *ātman*) functions as the underlying fundament of reality in *Upaniṣadic* thought.

As we have seen in our treatment of related concepts found in the *Huayan Sūtra*, the fact that sentient beings have within them the *tathāgatagarbha* indicates that they possess the tathāgata's virtuous nature and wisdom. These qualities provide all living entities with the inner potential for attaining Buddhahood. However, because of its association with the concept of selfhood, the *tathāgatagarbha* seems to refer to more than just potential. The Self as the *tathāgatagarbha* and as a synonym for the tathāgata not only provides individuals with the ability to become buddhas, but also serves as the fundamental basis of their existence—as another name for ultimate truth—much as *ātman* by virtue of its equality with Brahman operates as the underlying basis of all reality.

[200] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 134.
[201] Ibid.

To support this point. Yinshun. in his discussion of the word *dhātu* (*jie* 界). often translated into English as "sphere" or "realm." emphasizes the role in the development of *tathāgatagarbha* thought of the teaching that stresses the equality of sentient beings and the tathāgata. He first notes that *jie* has the meaning of *jiezang* 界藏 or *jiexing* 界性 which refers to the hidden and unmanifest nature of a thing. He explains:

> *Jie* is *jiezang*. *jiexing*. It is like in gold ore. there is the nature of gold. or in silver ore there is the nature of silver. It (*jie*) is originally expressed like this. It is a hidden storehouse which has not [yet] manifested. When it passes through the smelting process. it then is revealed.[202]

We have already encountered the basic metaphor used here in previous chapters. *Jie* is like the gold (or silver) found in ore. The ore contains pure gold even though worthless metals and dirt surround it. It stays hidden in that form until undergoing a smelting process that will extract the gold from the ore. Similarly. one must eliminate the hindrances that cover the *jiexing* in order for it to become manifest. In the context of *tathāgatagarbha* thought. *jie* is another name for the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha*. The *jiexing* of sentient beings and the *jiexing* of the tathāgata are likewise equivalent in meaning. Therefore. when one becomes enlightened. she becomes a tathāgata. but in so doing nothing is lost or gained in the process. It is not as if one destroys the sentient being within him. replacing it with a Buddha. The nature of sentient beings and the nature of the tathāgata are one and the same:

[202] Ibid.. 135.

> The *tathāgatagarbha* ...is [a case of] the non-duality and non-differentiation of the nature of sentient beings, the tathāgata's nature, and the *dhātu* nature...However, from the perspective of the nature of sentient beings it is called the realm of sentient beings. From the perspective of the theory of the tathāgata nature within sentient beings, it is called the tathāgata realm.[203]

The *No Increase, No Decrease Sūtra* describes the realm of sentient beings as having the quality of boundless purity (*wubian jingming* 無邊淨明). However, when the immeasurable afflictions obscure this purity, the *Sūtra* refers to it as the sphere in which "living creatures revolve through birth and death" (*shengsi liuzhuan de zhongsheng* 生死流轉的衆生). The name changes based only on whether one views it from the perspective of ignorance or from enlightenment. When ignorance prevails, then the hindrances cover over and hide it. When awakening occurs, then it is revealed. In either case the *jiexing* remains pure. One can say, then, that the underlying natures of deluded sentient beings, bodhisattvas, or fully awakened tathāgatas are indistinguishable.[204] The fundamental aspect shared by these beings—known variously as *jiexing*, the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha*, or the *dharmakāya*—binds them together making them ultimately indistinct.

Now we must return to the question of the relationship between *tathāgatagarbha* thought and the teachings which advocate the unity of *ātman* and Brahman. The fact that the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha* exists in unadulterated form within enlightened and unenlightened beings implies that it serves as the foundation of both samsaric existence and ultimate reality. As such, it has been called the Inconceivable Self (*bu siyi wo* 不思

[203] Ibid.

議我), the Great Self (*dawo* 大我), and the True Self (*zhenwo* 眞我)—appellations that bring to mind the *ātman* and the role it plays in the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*. The similarities between "the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha*" and *ātman* have caused the Buddhist tradition much consternation especially in light of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism's emphasis on no-self and early Mahāyāna Buddhism's stress on emptiness. Thus, the question becomes the following: if indeed selfhood existed all along, why did the Buddha first teach no-self?

Yinshun presents the *tathāgatagarbha* position on this question by referring to the *Nirvana Sūtra*'s discussion of the issue. According to the *Sūtra*, the Buddha first taught no-self in order to eradicate the tendency among sentient beings to become attached to the self as a permanent and unchanging construct. In other words, it was a form of *upāya*. Metaphorically speaking, no-self functioned as a medicine to cure a specific illness: the hypostatization of the self.[205] The Buddha had to take care of this problem before he could speak of the correct view of the self, or otherwise the attachment to the erroneously conceived self would only deepen. Thus, the Buddha did not immediately set forth the teaching of the True Self or the *tathāgatagarbha* because the spiritual capacities of the vast majority of sentient beings were not ready for it yet.[206]

As for the relationship between the selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the teachings of other Indian religions, the *Nirvana Sūtra* implies that the *ātman* teachings of

[204] Ibid., 136.

[205] The passage in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* that Yinshun quotes uses the metaphor of the old and new medicine—old medicine being the doctrine of no-self and new medicine being the doctrine of selfhood. Ibid., 137. Also see T. 12.378c-379a.

non-Buddhist traditions result from a misinterpretation of the meaning of self found in Buddhist contexts. Yinshun summarizes this position as follows:

> For example, Indian religions speak of there being a self. Now within the Buddha Dharma, there also is talk of a self. The non-Buddhist theory (*waidaoshuo* 外道說) comes from the Buddha Dharma. The Buddha Dharma's theory of the self of course shares similarities with [that of] the Hindu religious traditions (*shenjiao* 神教). However, although the non-Buddhist traditions speak of the self, their understanding inevitably is flawed.[207]

The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* uses the knife metaphor to clarify this point: some people have heard of a knife, but have not seen it. Consequently they do not know what the true appearance of a knife looks like. Although descriptions of the knife derive from how it really appears, this type of information is merely hearsay for the person who has no first hand experience seeing a knife. Thus, any attempt by such a person to imagine the knife's form may result in an erroneous representation of it. According to the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, this case describes the situation for the non-Buddhist interpretation of the self. Though both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist understanding of the self originates from the same source, the non-Buddhist version is based on hearsay only and thus is mistaken.

After presenting this metaphor, Yinshun quickly points out that the view wherein the non-Buddhist theory of the self derives from the Buddha Dharma is based on belief only and not on the historical circumstances of the situation. The *Upaniṣads*, many of which predate the development of *tathāgatagarbha* thought, describe the *ātman* as having

[206] In order to explain that sentient beings had to be appropriately prepared before they could fully comprehend the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* uses the metaphor of the sick child who could not drink his mother's milk. Yinshun paraphrases this metaphor. Ibid.

the qualities of permanence, blissfulness, wisdom, and purity—all of which are very similar to those characteristics assigned to the *tathāgatagarbha*. Moreover, based on the historical development of Buddhist doctrine, Yinshun notes that the Buddha specifically established the teaching of 'no-self' in order to nullify the already existing view of the self advanced by religious thinkers whose thought stems from the *Upaniṣads*. He argues that, according to the *Lankavatara Sūtra*, the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching was established for the sake of those who already believe in the existence of the *ātman*. So in this way, the *tathāgatagarbha* theory was based on the *ātman* teachings—not the other way around. However, the *tathāgatagarbha* theory was not meant as a definitive expression of truth as is the case with the *ātman*/Brahman ideology, but rather as an expedient means. To forthrightly tell people who believe in an *ātman* that there is no self would only frighten them. On the other hand, to explain that they possess the *tathāgatagarbha*, which has similar qualities to the self, eases their fears. The purpose of this doctrine, then, is to gently guide practitioners to an awareness of ultimate truth, which for Yinshun consists in the emptiness of all things.[208]

[207] Ibid.,138.
[208] Ibid., 138-139.

4.3. *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* IS NOT EMPTY (*RULAIZANGBUKONG* 同來藏不空)

Yinshun points out that those who advocate *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as an expression of ultimate truth criticize those who promote the doctrine which states that all dharmas are empty (Skt. *sarvadharma śūnyatā*; Chn. *yiqiefa kong* 一切法空). Yinshun begins his discussion of this issue by indicating the scriptural support for this criticism. The *Great Dharma Drum Sūtra* argues that the various texts which espouse the doctrine of emptiness are non-definitive (*buliaoyi* 不了義) texts, that is, they do not express Buddhist truth directly but instead require further explanation for one to understand their underlying connection with the ultimate. The *Angulimālya Sūtra* also critiques the doctrine of emptiness. It contains a lively interchange between Manjusri and Angulimālya. Manjusri argues that the important quality which characterizes the fundamental nature of the Buddhas is non-existence (*wuyouxiang* 無有相). Thus, liberation consists in an empty quiescence[209] that does not possess things that exist[210] (*kongji wusuoyou* 空寂無所有). However, Angulimālya retorts caustically, accusing Mañjuśrī of not understanding the true meaning of emptiness. He argues that "some dharmas are empty and some dharmas are not empty (*youyifa kong, youyifa bukong*

[209] *Kongji* literally means void and tranquil. Here it means "completely empty"—the reality of the lack of inherent existence of all things. Simply put it refers to emptiness.

[210] *Wusuoyou* 無所有 has a number of different, but related meanings. These include:
1. A condition of having overcome affliction: to be beyond the limits of the effects of the afflictions.
2. Non-existent.
3. Unobtainable.
4. Possessing no object.
5. Having no characteristic or mark.

Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism." 26 November 2001.

有異法空，有異法不空)...If we only talk about the extreme of emptiness (*jikong* 極空), then we will topple the Buddha's true and correct dharma."[211]

According to Yinshun, from this interchange, we learn that viewing emptiness as the definitive expression of truth will undermine the ultimate intent of the Buddha Dharma. The more correct understanding of reality espouses the position that some dharmas are empty while others are not. To clarify the meaning of this idea, the *Nirvana Sūtra*[212] employs the metaphor of an empty bottle. When we discover that a bottle generally used for holding a certain liquid no longer contains that liquid, we then refer to it as an empty container. But, in fact, the bottle is not empty just because it no longer has anything inside, for it still has its shape and color. Likewise, the *Sūtra* argues, liberation is not empty because it too has shape and color. We can describe it as empty only when we mean that evil and suffering no longer exist within it (just like when we say the bottle is empty by virtue of the fact that liquid can no longer be found inside). Thus, reality from the enlightened perspective is not empty if by emptiness what we intend is non-existence. However, it is empty of suffering and affliction.[213] According to those who advocate *tathāgatagarbha* thought, then, texts that stress the doctrine of emptiness such as the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* are ultimately incorrect. Yinshun writes:

[211] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 141.
[212] *Dapan Nihuan Jing* 大般泥洹經. See T. 12.875a.
[213] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 141. Yinshun notes that Dharmarakṣa translates the notion that some dharmas are empty and others are not as "non-empty emptiness" (*bukong kong* 不空空) and "empty non-emptiness" (*kong bukong* 空不空).

> In short, the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* say that all dharmas are empty and that the tathāgata, *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi* (*wushang puti* 無上菩提), and nirvana also are ultimately empty. Among those who [espouse] the *tathāgatagarbha*, [these sutras] are not correct. They are teachings in need of further explanation (*youxu shuo* 有餘說) and are non-definitive teachings (*buliaoyi shuo* 不了義說).[214]

Yinshun notes that the concept of some dharmas being empty and others not has antecedents in sectarian Buddhism, especially with the Sarvāstivādins and the Lokottaravādins. The former perceived conditioned dharmas (*youweifa* 有爲法)[215] and unconditioned dharmas (*wuweifa* 無爲法)[216] as real while the self (*wo* 我) and those things contained within the self (*wosuo* 我所)[217] do not exist. When the sutras say that all the conditioned things are empty (*zhuxing kong* 諸行空), according to the Sarvāstivādins, this means that they lack a self and those things associated with a self. The conditioned dharmas, themselves, on the other hand, are not empty. A related view of reality was championed by the Yogacara school of Mahāyāna with the concept of the three natures. Briefly, these three include "the nature of existence arising from causes and conditions" (Skt. *paratantra-svabhāva*; Chn. *yitaqixing* 依他起性), "the nature of existence being perfectly accomplished" (Skt. *parinispanna- svabhāva*; Chn. *yuanchengshixing* 圓成實性), and "the nature of existence produced from attachment to illusory

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[214] Ibid.

[215] Literally "conditioned existence." (Skt. *saṃskṛta*). The various manifest phenomena that are created as the synthesis of causes and conditions. In other words, it refers to that which is created by cause and condition, and which arises, changes and ceases. It also refers to the five *skandhas* of form, feeling, perception, impulse and consciousness, all of which are conditioned elements. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001.

[216] Literally "unconditioned existence." (Skt. *asaṃskṛta*). Eternal, absolute conditions separated from arising, changing, and ceasing. A way of speaking about *nirvāṇa*, a *nirvāṇa* which is not subject to cause, or the principle of the condition of escape from transmigration. In contrast to conditioned existence, unconditioned existence has the meaning of eternally existing. Ibid.

[217] *Ātmīya*. The possessions of the self; the functions or activities of the self. Ibid.

discrimination" (Skt. *parikalpita- svabhāva*; Chn. *bianji suoyixing* 遍計所執性).[218] Though the *paratantra-svabhāva* is conditioned and the *parinispanna- svabhāva* is unconditioned, they both exist and therefore are not empty. On the other hand, the self of the *parikalpita- svabhāva* and the phenomena to which it attaches does not exist and therefore is empty. According to Yinshun, the idea that all dharmas are empty is a theory which derives from the truly existing realities described by the *paratantra-svabhāva* and the *parinispanna- svabhāva*, but these natures themselves are not empty. The Yogācāra tradition does not place emptiness under the rubric of non-definitive truth. It recognizes the doctrine as definitive as long as one understands it within the context of the three natures. This notion is what Yinshun calls "the theory of the dharma which grasps that emptiness exists" (*qing (zhi) kong fa you shuo* 情執空法有說).[219]

The Lokottaravādins regard worldly dharmas (*shijianfa* 世間法)[220] as empty and false while considering transmundane dharmas (*chushijianfa* 出世間法)[221] as true and

[218] The *parikalpita- svabhāva* is the mind of mistakenly assigning a real essence to those things that are produced from causes and conditions and have no true essence. The *paratantra-svabhāva* is the notion that all existence is produced according to cause. The *parinispanna- svabhāva* is the highest state of existence conforming to ultimate reality. In Yogācāra theory, both the conditioned (*paratantra-svabhāva*) and the unconditioned (*parinispanna- svabhāva*) are seen as two aspects of the same reality: the true nature of conditioned existence being that of the absolute existence of unconditioned elements. Ibid. Also See Robert Gimello, "Chih-yen, (602-668) and the Foundations of Hua-yen Buddhism" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1976), 239-244.
Yinshun treats the three natures in Chapter Seven of his *Rulaizang zhi yanjiu*, entitled "The *Tathāgatagarbha* theory of the Yogācāra Sect." See Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 188-189.
[219] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 142.
[220] "Worldly dharmas" include all aspects of reality born of delusive karma, including the three realms (the realms of desire, form, and formlessness), and sentient beings. Of the Four Noble Truths, the first two, the truth of suffering (Skt. *duhkha*, Chn. *kudi* 苦諦) and the truth of the arising of suffering (Skt. *samudaya*; Chn. *jidi* 集諦), belong to the category of "worldly dharmas." Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism." 26 November 2001.
[221] "Transmundane dharmas" include those things that belong to the world of enlightenment such as, for example, the last two of the Four Noble Truths, the truth of the cessation of suffering (Skt. *nirodha*; Chn. *miedi* 滅諦) and the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (Skt. *mārga*; Chn. *daodi* 道諦), the *pāramitās*, and *nirvāṇa*. Ibid.

non-empty. This position is called "the theory of the mundane being false and the ultimate being true" (*suwang zhenshi* 俗妄眞實).[222] The Mahāyāna perspective that holds a philosophical position closest to this one is the that of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching.

According to this teaching, emptiness characterizes all conditioned dharmas. Thus, the conditioned self-nature (*youwei zixing* 有爲自性) is empty. However, the tathāgata, which is an unconditioned dharma, is not empty. Yinshun quotes the Nirvana Sutra to make this point: "Stop seeing the tathāgata as the same as conditioned things (*xing* 行)! The true and real tathāgata is an unconditioned dharma. You should not again say that it is a conditioned dharma."[223] But Yinshun points out that many Mahāyāna sutras say that all dharmas are empty, including the tathāgata and nirvana. However, according to the *Nirvana Sūtra*, "nirvana is empty" means that it is empty of afflictions and conditioned things. It does not mean that it is empty itself. Yinshun writes, "[The notion that] 'Nirvana is empty' (*niepankong* 涅槃空) is the theory that nirvana is separate from all the afflictions (*fannao* 煩惱) and all conditioned things. The great nirvana which is separate from all conditioned things is not empty."[224]

Yinshun concludes his discussion of the non-empty nature of the *tathāgatagarbha* by demonstrating that advocates of the emptiness doctrine recognize a problem in immediately telling new practitioners that all things are empty. Such a view can be detrimental to the beginner, causing him great fear. Thus instead, as a form of expedient means, new practitioners are taught a view similar to the idea that "some things are empty

[222] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 142.

and some things are not." However, as the adept matures in his practice, this view will be replaced by the definitive truth that no thing has a permanent and unchanging existence. Those who advance the *tathāgatagarbha* position concur that the emptiness teaching could discourage people from putting into practice the Buddhadharma. For this reason, they regard the teaching as a non-definitive expression of Buddhist truth. The definitive expression consists in the realization that the *tathāgatagarbha* as indicative of ultimate reality is truly not empty, and thus, exists. Yinshun writes:

> But [those who advocate] the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching scold [those who advocate] the emptiness teaching, proclaiming the doctrine that the ultimate is truly not empty (*zhenshi bukong* 眞實不空). [This perspective] opposes the meanings found in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* and the *Sūtra of the Explication of the Underlying Meaning* (*Jie shenmi jing* 解深密經).[225]

Yinshun, of course, favors those who advocate emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist Truth.

Here again we find Yinshun favoring emptiness. In this chapter, however, he does not refute the claims made by those who advance *tathāgatagarbha* theory as ultimate truth. He merely points out the *tathāgatagarbha's* similarity with the Brahman/*ātman* teachings of the *Upaniṣads* and then emphasizes emptiness as definitive truth.

[223] Ibid., 143.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid., 145.

CHAPTER 5

YINSHUN'S INTERPRETATION OF *THE JEWEL NATURE TREATISE'S* TREATMENT OF THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA*

Chapter Four treated Yinshun's discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha* as the "womb of the Tathāgata" by focusing on his explanation of the Tathāgata, the "selfhood of the *tathāgatagarbha*," and the "non-empty *tathāgatagarbha*." In this chapter, we will focus on Yinshun's explication of *The Jewel Nature Treatise* (Skt. *Ratnagotravibhāga*; Chn. *Jiujing yisheng baoxinglun* 究竟一乘寶性論) wherein Yinshun discusses the *tathāgatagarbha's* relationship to such concepts as the *dharmakāya*, "suchness without distinction," "the Buddha's seed nature," "non-emptiness," and "transforming the base."

In Chapter Six of *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun analyzes *The Jewel Nature Treatise* and the role it played in the development of *tathāgatagarbha* ideology. He reiterates the point that the popularity of this ideology derives from the ease with which the common person can understand the basic tenets of the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching. People's ability to easily comprehend it allowed the doctrine to spread quickly, deeply influencing the development of the Buddhist tradition as a whole.

By the third century CE, the first *sūtras* espousing the *tathāgatagarbha* were transmitted. Though no mention of the concept appears in the Mādhyamika texts of the beginning of the third century, Yinshun notes that Āryadeva's[226] disciple Rāhulabhadra 羅喉羅跋陀羅 used the four virtues of the tathāgata, namely permanence, bliss, selfhood,

[226] Āryadeva (Sheng Tipo 聖提婆), a disciple of Nāgārjuna (Longshu 龍樹) was an important figure in the formation of the Mādhyamika school.

and purity, to explain the "eight negations."[227] By the middle of the fourth century, the Yogācāra school, contending with the popularity of the doctrine, could not but integrate it into its own teachings. Ever since the fourth century CE, then, many Mahāyāna *sūtras* and treatises offered explanations of this teaching in one form or another.

Though the *Ratnagotravibhāga*'s presentation of *tathāgatagarbha* theory shares many similarities with early *tathāgatagarbha* thought, it also bears significant influence from the Yogācāra school. In fact, Yinshun suggests that by combining *tathāgatagarbha* ideology with Yogācāra doctrine, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* established a new doctrinal system distinguishable from that of the Yogācāra sect. Therefore, with this text we find both a method of explanation (*jieshuo de fangfa* 解說的方法) that approaches closely to that of the Yogācāra and an *ātman*-like philosophical flavor characteristic of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine in the early period of its development.

[227] Babu 八不. In the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Nāgārjuna He proffers these "eight negations" as the means for avoiding the two extreme views of "being" and "nothingness." See Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism*, 19. For further explanation of the "eight negations" see Ng's Chapter Two.

5.1. THE *RATNAGOTRAVIBHĀGA* AS THE CHIEF *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* TREATISE

In this section, Yinshun analyzes three texts: the *Jewel Nature Treatise* (*Jiujing Yisheng Baoxinglun* 究竟一乘寶性論), the *Fajie Wuchabielun* 法界無差别論, and the *Wushangyijing* 無上依經. These texts played influential roles in the spread and development of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. Yinshun contends that they adhere closely to the original meaning of the theory espoused by earlier thinkers and *sūtras*.

5.1.1. THE *JEWEL NATURE TREATISE* (*JIUJING YISHENG BAOXINGLUN*)

According to Yinshun, the *Jewel Nature Treatise* in four fascicles was written by Sāramati[228] and translated into Chinese by Ratnamati.[229] The text can be divided into two sections: a verse section referred to as the *Benlun* 本論 and a verse and prose section known as the *Shilun* 釋論. The *Shilun* includes the verses of the *Benlun*. The Chinese tradition attributes both the *Benlun* and *Shilun* sections to Sāramati while the Sanskrit and Tibetan traditions attribute the *Benlun* to Maitreya and the *Shilun* to Asaṇga.

Yinshun argues that though the *Ratnagotravibhāga's* content and style are similar to that of texts in the Yogācāra system to which both Asaṇga and Vasubandhu belong, fundamental differences exist between the way that the Yogācāra texts and the

[228] While the Chinese tradition gives Sāramati as the author, the Tibetan tradition lists Maitreya 彌勒 and Asaṇga as co-authors. For a detailed discussion of the *Baoxinglun's* authorship see Takasaki, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, 6-9.

[229] Yinshun, quoting the *Record of Śākyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan Period* (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄, notes that an ancient catalog of texts, called the *Baochangdenglu* 寶唱等錄, indicates that both Ratnamati and Bodhiruci translated the text. Apparently, both translators initially collaborated only to later separate over differences of opinion. For a well-argued refutation of the existence of Bodhiruci's translation, see Takasaki, *Ratnagotravibhāga*, 8.

Ratnagotravibhāga treat the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. Yinshun agrees with the Chinese tradition in assigning authorship of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to Sāramati. He writes:

> However, though the style and content of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* approach that of the Yogācāra system, many fundamental differences exist between [the *Ratnagotravibhāga*] and the Yogācāra regarding their views of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Therefore, as for the tradition that says Asaṇga wrote it or Vasubandhu wrote it, it appears that this tradition is not as good as the one which says that Sāramati wrote it.[230]

Yinshun then turns his attention to the organization of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, distinguishing three versions of the text that have contributed to the development of the Chinese *Baoxinglun*: the "Four Dharmas (*sifa* 四法)," the "Seven Kinds of Admantine Phrases (*qizhong jingang ju* 七種金剛句)," and the "Eleven Chapters (*Shiyipin* 十一品)." The four dharmas include the Buddha Nature (Skt. *buddhadhātu;* Chn. *foxing* 佛性), the Buddha's Bodhi (Skt. *buddhabodhi*; Chn. *foputi* 佛菩提), the Buddha Dharma (*fofa* 佛法), and the Buddha's Activities (Skt. *buddhakarman*; Chn. *foye* 佛業). About these four, Yinshun writes: "That on which the Buddha depended (*yizhi* 依止) was the nature; that which he then cultivated and realized was wisdom; that which he perfected was all the dharmas—the excellent virtues (Skt. *guṇa*; Chn. *gongde* 功德); and that by which he benefited sentient beings was his activity (*shiye* 事業)."[231] These four dharmas comprise the main body of the *Benlun* or verse portion of the *Baoxinglun*. The *Shilun* delineates the "seven kinds of adamantine phrases." These consist of:

1. the Buddha jewel (*fobao* 佛寶)

[230]Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 152.
[231] Ibid.

2. the Dharma jewel (*fabao* 法寶)
3. the Sangha jewel (*sengbao* 僧寶)
4. nature (*xing* 性)
5. bodhi (*puti* 菩提)
6. the excellent virtues (*gongde* 功德)
7. activity (*ye* 業)

Finally, the Chinese translation of the *Baoxinglun* divides the text into eleven chapters, entitled as follows:

1. "Teaching and Transformation" (*jiaohua pin* 教化品)
2. "Buddha Jewel" (*fobao pin* 佛寶品)
3. "Dharma Jewel" (*fabao pin* 法寶品)
4. "Sangha Jewel" (*sengbao pin* 僧寶品)
5. "All Sentient Beings Possess the *Tathāgatagarbha*" (*yiqie zhongsheng you rulaizang pin* 一切衆生有如來藏品)
6. "That Which the Innumerable Hindrances Bind" (*wuliang fannao suochan pin* 無量煩惱所纏品)
7. "Purpose of Instruction" (*weiheyishuo pin* 爲何義說品)
8. "Body Transforms into Purity and Becomes *Bodhi*" (*shenzhuan qingjing cheng puti pin* 身轉清淨成菩提品)
9. "Tathāgata's Excellent Virtues" (*rulai gonde pin* 如來功德品)
10. "Buddha's Activity Which of Itself Does Not Rest" (*ziran buxiuxi foye pin* 自然不休息佛業品)
11. "Comparing Belief and Excellent Virtues" (*jiaoliang xin gonde pin* 校量信功德品)

In order to illustrate the relationship between the "Four Dharmas" of the *Benlun*, the "Seven Adamantine Phrases" of the *Shilun*, and the "Eleven Chapters" of the Chinese translation of the whole text, Yinshun provides a chart demonstrating where the three sections overlap with one another. The chart is reproduced in full below.[232]

TABLE 1. CHART COMPARING THE "FOUR DHARMAS" OF THE *BENLUN*, THE "SEVEN ADAMANTINE PHRASES" OF THE *SHILUN*, AND THE "ELEVEN CHAPTERS" OF THE ENTIRE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF THE *RATNAGOTRAVIBHĀGA*.

The Four Dharmas	The Seven Phrases	The Eleven Chapters
		1. Teaching and Transformation
	1. Buddha Jewel	2. Buddha Jewel
	2. Dharma Jewel	3. Dharma Jewel
	3. Sangha Jewel	4. Sangha Jewel
	4. nature	5. All Sentient Beings Possess the Tathāgatagarbha
1. Buddha Nature	4. nature	6. That Which the Innumerable Hindrances Bind
	4. nature	7. Purpose of Instruction
2. Buddha's Bodhi	5. bodhi	8. Body Transforms into Purity and Becomes Bodhi
3. Buddha Dharma	6. the excellent virtues	9. Tathāgata's Excellent Virtues
4. Buddha's Activities	7. activity	10. Buddha's Activity which of Itself Does Not Rest
		11. Comparing Belief and Excellent Virtues

[232] For the Chinese version of the chart see Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 153-153.

5.1.2. THE *WUSHANGYIJING*

In this section Yinshun compares the two-fascicle *Wushangyijing*, translated into Chinese by Paramārtha, with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. This text, which is a treatise written in the form of a *sūtra*, is divided into seven chapters:

1. "The Comparing Excellent Virtues Chapter" (*jiaoliang gonde pin* 校量功德品)
2. "The *Tathāgatadhātu* Chapter" (*rulaijie pin* 如來界品)
3. "The *Bodhi* Chapter" (*puti pin* 菩提品)
4. "The Tathāgata's Excellent Virtues Chapter" (*rulai gonde pin* 如來功德品)
5. "The Tathāgata's Activities Chapter" (*rulai shi pin* 如來事品)
6. "The Singing Praises Chapter" (*zanjin pin* 讚歎品)
7. "The *Zhulei Pin*" 囑累品

Yinshun points out that Chapters Two through Five correspond exactly with the main body of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, namely those sections that discuss the Buddha's nature, wisdom, excellent virtues, and activities. As for the first chapter, it originally existed as a separate text which had the function of praising the inconceivable virtues (*buke siyi gongde* 不可思議功德) of the Tathāgata's *śarīra* (*sheli* 舍利). Yinshun notes that in the Buddhist world the Tathāgata's *śarīra* are also known as the *rulaituodu* 如來馱都, a transliteration for *rulaijie* (*tathāgatadhātu*), which is generally accepted by proponents of the *tathāgatagarbha* as a synonym for the *tathāgatagarbha*. Thus, when the "comparing excellent virtues chapter" in the *Wushangyijing* praises the virtues of the Tathāgata's *śarīra*, from the perspective of *tathāgatagarbha* thought, it is actually praising the *tathāgatagarbha* as the *tathāgatadhātu*.

Turning to the other chapters. Yinshun clearly establishes the *Wushangyijing* as a *tathāgatagarbha* text. For example, the concepts in its *tathāgatadhātu* chapter share much in common with other *tathāgatagarbha* works. Likewise, the wisdom chapter's discussion of the distinctions between the ten activities (*shishifenbie* 十事分別) is very similar to that found in the Buddha Nature and Buddha's Wisdom chapters of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

However, despite their similarities, Yinshun points out that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Wushangyijing* differ on a number of points. For instance, the *Wushangyijing* does not contain any references to the nine metaphors for the *tathāgatagarbha* or the activities of the tathāgata (*tathāgatakarman*). Moreover, the two texts do not agree on the numbers of the tathāgata's excellent virtues. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* lists sixty-four kinds of virtues while the *Wushangyijing* delineates one hundred eight. The texts also have slightly different interpretations of the concepts, *tathāgatadhātu* and wisdom (*bodhi*) as well as how belief in the *dharma* (*xinfa* 信法), wisdom (*bore* 般若), *samādhi* (*sanmei* 三昧), and great compassion (*dabei* 大悲) relate to realization.

5.1.3. THE *DASHENG FAJIE WUCHABIE LUN*

The *Dasheng Fajie Wuchabie Lun* was also written by Sāramati and translated into Chinese by Tiyun Bore 提雲般若. This particular text has two versions. The first is divided into twelve paragraphs. Each paragraph begins with a verse and then is followed by a prose explanation. The second version has all of the verses at the beginning as the

main body of the treatise with the prose explanation following them. Despite the different arrangements, the content of the two versions is virtually the same. As for the specifics of the content, the treatise discusses twelve kinds of meaning for the term, *bodhicitta* (*putixin*):

1. result (*guo* 果)
2. cause (*yin*因)
3. self-nature (*zixing* 自性)
4. different name (*yiming* 異名)
5. without difference (*wuchabie* 無差別)
6. time and position (*fenwei* 分位)
7. undefiled (*wuran* 無染)
8. constancy (*changheng* 常恒)
9. concomitance (*xiangying* 相應)
10. *buzuo yili* 不作義利
11. *zuo yili* 作義利

Yinshun notes that the way the text treats these topics is very similar to how the *Ratnagotravibhāga* presents them.

Yinshun concludes this section by emphasizing that the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the *Wushangyijing*, and the *Dasheng Fajie Wuchabie Lun* are all the same type of text. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Wushangyijing* both have the Buddha Nature, the Buddha's wisdom, the Buddha's virtues, and the Buddha's activities as their main focus. The *Dasheng Fajie Wuchabie Lun*, focusing on an explication of *bodhicitta*, incorporates into its content discussions of the concepts "result" and "self-benefit" found in the *tathāgatagarbha* and *bodhi* chapters of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Similarly, despite subtle differences in emphasis, the *bodhi* chapter of the *Wushangyijing* also contains sections of the *Baoxinglun's tathāgatagarbha* and *bodhi* chapters.

5.2. THE TEXTS AND TREATISES ON WHICH THE *RATNAGOTRAVIBHĀGA* ARE BASED

Here, Yinshun lists the important works used in the formation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Through a series of elaborate comparisons,[233] he emphasizes the similarities between the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Treatise on the Scripture of Adorning the Great Vehicle* (*Dasheng Zhuangyan Jinglun* 大乘莊嚴經論, commonly abbreviated as the *Zhuangyan Lun* 莊嚴論) a Yogācāra text, arguing that this text played an important role in the development of the *Baoxinglun's* content. In fact, the style in which the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is written suggests Yogācāra influence: "One can say that the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, written in the period of the development of the Yogācāra style of study, received influence from the Yogācāra school."[234] However, Yinshun points out that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is not a Yogācāra text, noting that it does not discuss important Yogācāra doctrines such as the theory of the "seeds" (Skt. *bīja*; Chn. *zhongzi* 種子).[235]

Yinshun then specifies from which texts certain concepts in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* derive. For example, in the *Benlun*, the *Buddhadhātu* theory is based in part on the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. Among the *Buddhadhātu's* ten meanings, the "meaning of cause" (*yinyi* 因義) comes from the *Zhuangyen Lun*, the "meaning of result"

[233] For the details of this comparison, see Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 160-162.
[234] Ibid., 162.
[235] In Yogācāra Buddhism, the seeds are one phase of the latent potentialities of all mental and physical dharmas which are stored in the alaya consciousness. Coming into existence as the result of present activities and conditions, the seeds result in new potentialities, giving rise to continued existence which has a direct relationship to prior causes and conditions. Muller, "Digital Dictionary of Buddhism," 26 November 2001. Yinshun treats in detail the relationship between Yogācāra and *tathāgatagarbha*, including the theory of the "seeds," in chapter seven of his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*.

(*guoyi* 果義) from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, the "meaning of activity" (*yeyi* 業義) from the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, and the "meaning of non-difference" (*wuchabieyi* 無差別義) from *No Increase and No Decrease Sūtra*. Furthermore, the "sixty-four kinds of excellent virtues" of the *Benlun's* "Buddha's virtues" section stems from the "Jeweled Woman Chapter" (*Baonupin* 寶女品) of the *Great Collection Sūtra* (*Dajijing* 大集經), the nine metaphors of the "Buddha's Activities" section originates with the Rulai Zhuangyan Zhihui Guangming Ru Yiqie Fojingjie Jing 如來莊嚴智慧光明入一切佛境界經, and the "Eight Meanings" of the "Buddha's Bodhi Section" derive from the "Bodhi Chapter" of the *Zhuangyanlun*.

The *Shilun*, on the other hand, quotes a broader range of *sūtras* than its *Benlun* counterpart. Yinshun lists these works as follows:

1. *The No Increase No Decrease Sūtra* (*Buzeng Bujian Jing* 不增不減經)
2. *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā Sūtra* (*Shengman Jing* 勝鬘經)
3. *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (*Rulaizang Jing* 如來藏經)
4. *The Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Daban Niepan Jing* 大般涅槃經)
5. *The Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra and the Diamond Sūtra* (*Daborejing* 大般若經，*Jingang Bore Jing* 金剛般若經)
6. The "Tathāgata Manifests Chapter" of the *Huayan Sūtra* (*Huayan Jing* 華嚴經， *Rulai Chuxian Pin* 如來出現品)
7. *Fo Huayan Ru Rulai Zhide Busiyi Jingjie Jing* 佛華嚴入如來智德不思議境界經
8. *Rulai Zhuangyan Zhihui Guangming Ru Yiqie Fo Jingjie Jing* 如來莊嚴智慧光明入一切佛境界經
9. *The Lotus Sūtra* (*fahua jing* 法華經)
10. *The Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra* (*Baoji Jing* 寶積經)
11. *Liugen Ju Jing* 六根聚經
12. *The Mahāyāna Abhidharma Sutra* (*Api Damo Dasheng Jing* 阿毘達磨大乘經)
13. *The Great Collection Sutra* (*Dafangdeng Daji Jing* 大方等大集經)

Yinshun points out that from the brevity of the *sūtras* quoted, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is by no means a treatise restricted only to a discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha*—though this is its chief concern. For example, it also explains the "inconceivable boundaries of the Tathāgata (*bukesiyi de rulaijingjie* 不可思議的如來境界) which [has its foundation] in [the notion] that sentient beings and the Buddha are non-dual"(*shengfo buer* 生佛不二).[236] From the fact that it broadly quotes many different Mahāyāna texts, Yinshun argues that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* demonstrates clearly its close connection with Mahāyāna literature. It quotes mostly from later Mahāyāna sutras, placing particular emphasis on the *Great Collection Sūtra*, and citing passages from five of its chapters including the *Tuoluonizizaiwang* Chapter, the "Ocean Wisdom Chapter" (*meihui pusapin*每慧菩薩品), the "Jeweled Woman Chapter, the "Empty Womb Chapter" (*xukongzangpin*虛空藏品), and the Jeweled Hair Knot Chapter" (*baojipin* 寶髻品).

[236] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 165.

5.3. AN ANALYSIS OF THE MEANING OF THE *RATNAGOTRAVIBHĀGA*

In this section, Yinshun presents the important concepts discussed in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, focusing primarily on the *tathāgatagarbha*, "the mind of original purity" (*zixing qingjing xin* 自性清淨心), "non-emptiness" (*bukong* 不空) and "seed nature" (Skt. *gotra*; Chn. *zhongxing* 種性), and the "transformation of the basis" (*zhuanyi* 轉依).

5.3.1. THE *TATHĀGATAGARBHA*

Yinshun notes that by the third century CE, the *tathāgatagarbha* texts permeated the Buddhist world. However, because of the similarities of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory and non-Buddhist theories about *ātman*, early Mahāyāna Buddhism questioned the meaning of the idea that "sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*." According to Yinshun, the *Buddhadhātu* section of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, namely the *tathāgatagarbha* chapter, is a response to this question. The text addresses this issue by explicating three important concepts: "the pervasive *dharmakāya*" (*fashen bianman* 法身遍滿), "suchness without distinction" (*zhenru wuchabie* 眞如無差別), and "the Buddha's seed nature" (*fozhongxing* 佛種性).

5.3.1.1. THE PERVASIVE *DHARMAKĀYA*

The *dharmakāya* is the unsurpassed and complete Buddha-result (*jiujing yuanman de foguo* 究竟圓滿的佛果). It represents what the practitioner realizes through cultivation. Thus, it is the "result" of practice, namely enlightenment. Describing it as

"the pervasive *dharmakāya*" indicates that it exists everywhere, including the bodies and minds of all sentient beings: "[A] *Benlun gātha* says: 'The realm of all sentient beings is not separate from the wisdom of all the Buddhas.' Therefore, the *dharmakāya* pervades sentient beings, that is, the Buddha's wisdom pervades sentient beings."[237] Because sentient beings have within them the tathāgata's *dharmakāya* and wisdom (which is the same as the Buddha's *dharmakāya* and wisdom), one can say that sentient beings possess the "womb of the tathāgata." The tathāgata's *dharmakāya*, then, is a synonym for the *tathāgatagarbha*.

5.3.1.2. SUCHNESS WITHOUT DISTINCTION

"Suchness" (*zhenru* 眞如) does not have distinctions—it is non-dual. Furthermore, its original nature is pure and unchanging. According to Yinshun, to say that the original nature cannot change is to say that it is in essence pure. In fact, the undifferentiated original nature (*benxing wuchabie* 本性無差別) indicates the original purity of the mind (*xin de benxing qingjing* 心的本性清淨). Though impurities may accumulate, covering the mind, they do not affect or change its fundamental purity just as gold in the ground remains unaltered by the dirt that surrounds it.

Following his explanation of "suchness without distinctions" and the "purity of original nature," Yinshun explicates the relationship between the "purity of the original nature" and the *tathāgatagarbha*. He notes that the *gata* or *āgata* portion of the word tathāgata denotes "coming" (*laiqu* 來去), arriving (*daoda* 到達), and entering (*ru* 入).

[237] Ibid., 167.

The *tathā* part means "thus" (*ru* 如). So tathāgata can be translated "thus come" (*rulai* 如來). The "*ru*" in *rulai* can refer to "true thusness" (also *zhenru*), which indicates utmost purity separate from all defilements. Given this understanding of *rulai* and the fact that "true thusness" does not contain distinctions, one can understand *rulai* as meaning pure, undifferentiated "thusness." This "thusness" is indistinct from the "thusness" of sentient beings. The only difference is that in sentient beings the afflictions (*fannao*) hide it. When the pure "thusness" is covered by defilements in this way, it is called the *tathāgatagarbha*.

5.3.1.3. THE BUDDHA'S SEED NATURE

Of the three concepts that clarify the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the Buddha's seed nature is the most important. Yinshun notes that in the context of Indian society *zhongxing* means "caste," referring particularly to the *varna* system wherein society is delineated into four different categories: the priestly caste, the warrior caste, the producer caste, and the laborer caste. One cannot voluntarily choose one's caste, but rather is born into it. Thus, for example, if one's parents are of the warrior caste then even before birth one will be categorized as a warrior. In the Buddhist context, since sentient beings have the ability to become Buddhas, they must inherently possess the Buddha's seed nature. They are born with it. This seed nature is the underlying cause of enlightenment, functioning as the impetus for Buddhist practice.

The Buddha's seed nature is a synonym for the tathāgata's nature and the *tathāgatadhātu* (*rulaixing*/*rulaijie* 如來性/ 如來界). The *tathāgatagarbha* can be

understood from the perspective of the *tathāgatadhātu*. The "*dhātu*" part of the compound has the meaning of "cause" (*yin* 因)—the cause of liberation. Therefore, Yinshun argues that it is from the *tathāgatadhātu* as the "cause of enlightenment" that the concepts of the "seed nature" and the *tathāgatagarbha* come to denote the "cause" of becoming a Buddha. Yinshun quotes the *Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā Sūtra* to demonstrate that the *tathāgatagarbha* functions as the cause of enlightenment: "Based on the *tathāgatagarbha*, one therefore realizes *nirvāṇa* (*zheng niepan* 證涅槃). World-honored one! If one is without the *tathāgatagarbha*, he is unable to dislike suffering and pleasure and [is unable] to seek *nirvāṇa*."[238]

To summarize his discussion of the "the pervasive *dharmakāya*," "suchness without distinction," and "the Buddha seed nature" concepts, Yinshun writes:

> Though the purity of the *tathāgatagarbha's* original nature is covered by defilements, it still remains pure. That the original nature is pure and yet is covered by the afflictions is, from the perspective of the position of sentient beings, therefore [referred to as] "all sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*." This points [to the fact that] what is most important from [the perspective] of the original pure nature of sentient beings is that the *tathāgatagarbha* is the cause of becoming a Buddha (*rulaizang shi chengfo de yinxing* 如來藏是成佛的因性).[239]

5.3.2. THE ORIGINALLY PURE MIND

The originally pure mind was initially discussed by the *Āgamas* and then later advanced by the *sūtras* and treatises that advocate the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching. The

[238] Ibid., 171.
[239] Ibid., 172.

Ratnagotravibhāga states that it serves as another name for the *tathāgatagarbha* (as well as the *dharmakāya*, sentient beings, and the pure suchness *dharmadhātu*), though it does not have exactly the same meaning. When discussing the originally pure mind from the perspective of sentient beings wherein the pure mind is covered, though unaffected, by defilements, one can call it the *tathāgatagarbha*. However, from the perspective of Buddhas who have eliminated the defilements and manifested the originally pure mind, the term *tathāgatagarbha* no longer applies. Instead, "the pure suchness *dharmadhātu*" becomes a more appropriate synonym. In other words, from the point of view of the unenlightened, the originally pure mind is the *tathāgatagarbha*, providing living entities with the capacity for cultivating liberation. From the standpoint of the enlightened, it is a manifestation of the ultimate. Yinshun points out also that the originally pure mind does not diminish while it remains unrealized within sentient beings, nor is it augmented in any way when one becomes a Buddha. Rather, it stays in its unadulterated form, unaffected by the practitioner's awakening or delusion.

The phrase "originally pure mind" in Chinese consists of three parts: the compound *zixing* 自性, the compound *qingjing* 清淨, and the character *xin* 心. *Xin* (Skt. *citta*) means consciousness (*xinyishi* 心意識). According to Yinshun, the compound *zixing*, rendered in English as "own-nature," translates the Sanskrit words *prakṛti* and *svabhāva*. *Prakṛti* is also often translated into Chinese as *benxing* 本性, which means "original nature." Though this term is very common in Indian religious contexts outside of Buddhism,[240] it is not unusual to find it in Indian Buddhist literature as well. Yinshun

[240] Most notable is the religious system known as Sāṃkhya, where it refers to "things" or "matter."

gives the example of a concept, important in the *Perfection of Wisdom* literature, wherein *prakṛti* is used to mean original nature. This concept, known in Chinese as *benxingkong* 本性空 or *xingkong* 性空, translates into English literally as "original nature emptiness."

Zixing, however, most commonly translates the word *svabhāva*. *The Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* teach that all dharmas are without *svabhāva* (*yiqie fa wu zixing* 一切法無自性), that is, they are empty of a permanent and unchanging existence. Thus, these texts established the concepts of *svabhāva-śūnyatā* (*zixingkong* 自性空), "the emptiness of own-being," and *abhāva-svabhāva-śūnyatā* (*wuxing zixingkong* 無性自性空), "the emptiness of own-being of no nature."[241] *Svabhāva* used in this way has its roots in Nikāya Buddhism, for instance, among the Sarvastivadins who argue that all dharmas have "own-being" and is found in Nāgārjuna's emptiness critique wherein he argues that all things and living beings are empty of *svabhāva*. However, when the terms *benxing* and *zixing* are used in phrases that indicate the purity of the mind, they usually translate the word *prakṛti*.[242]

As for the compound *qingjing*, in both the *Āgamas* and the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*, it often translates the Sanskrit *prabhāsvara*, which literally means "luminous purity" (*guangming qingjing* 光明清淨). The *Ratnagotravibhāga* also implies this meaning when contrasting the originally pure mind with the defilements. However, when it appears in the phrase "all dharmas are pure" (*yiqiefa qingjing* 一切法清淨), *qingjing* is used for either *śuddha* or *viśuddhi*. Again the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* serve as

[241] Yinshun notes that these two terms are rendered into Chinese by Kumārajīva as *youfakong* 有法空and *wufa youfakong* 無法有法空.
[242] This is not always the case, however. Yinshun gives the example of *svabhāva-śuddha* (*zixing qingjing* 自性清淨).

examples of *qingjing* translating *viśuddhi* in the phrase "all dharmas are pure." Finally, Yinshun mentions the Sanskrit word *pariśuddha*, which refers to ultimate purity (*jijing* 極淨). *Qingjing* has this meaning when the texts discuss "realized purity" (*tijian qingjing* 體見清淨), which signifies the fully realized purity of the ultimate, free from defilements.

After examining the various elements of the phrase *benxing* (*zixing*) *qingjingxin*, Yinshun turns to a discussion of the fundamental issue associated with the concept of the originally pure mind: its relationship with the defilements. He says that according to common sense, people generally think that their minds can be corrupted by the defilements. However, based on conventional Buddhist truth this view is incorrect. The Mahasamghikas argued that we have a good nature (*shanxing* 善性) and a bad nature (*bushanxing* 不善性), but no neutral nature. Likewise, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* states that only a good mind and a bad mind exist. Conventionally speaking, the mind, according to Yinshun, does not abide in one place from moment to moment. Thus, it is constantly subject to production and destruction. Since the constantly changing good mind does not correspond with the afflictions, the afflictions are unable to pollute it. Similarly, the afflictions cannot corrupt the momentary bad mind (*chana bushanxin* 剎那不善性) "because the mind cannot touch (*chu* 觸) the afflictions and the afflictions also cannot touch the mind."[243] The word "touch" here conveys a sense of intimate connection. In this case, if the mind and afflictions "touched," it would mean that the two were closely linked, that is, virtually inseparable. Thus, when the mind would arise then the afflictions

[243] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 175.

would automatically arise; when the afflictions were destroyed then the mind would be destroyed. More specific to the issue of purity, if the afflictions, which are impure, are indissolubly coupled to the mind, then the mind would be made impure. Moreover, if the mind's existence and inexistence are so closely attached to the afflictions' existence and inexistence, then eliminating the impurities would eradicate the mind. To be precise, making the mind pure would only result in its destruction. The mind, however, is not destroyed when the afflictions are removed because the afflictions are adventitious to the mind, not inherent to it; they do not "touch" it. The mind then remains pure, ultimately unaffected by the defilements.

However, according to conventional truth, afflictions do exist and do, at least superficially, corrupt the mind even though ultimately it remains pure. The mind, under these circumstances, is known as the so-called "bad mind." Yinshun admits that the idea of a polluted mind that is inherently pure is difficult to understand. He provides some examples of how both pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna schools have dealt with this problem. The Sthavirā school postulates a third mind, namely a neutral mind (*wujixin* 無記心) that is neither inherently good nor evil. When this neutral mind corresponds with evil then it becomes evil. When it corresponds with goodness then it becomes good. The Mahasamghikas, on the other hand, do not establish the existence of a neutral mind. They argue that although there exists the phenomenon of a defiled mind, in fact the mind in essence never loses its purity. This view forms the basis of the originally pure mind doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory advanced by Mahāyāna proponents of the

teaching. For example, rather than having recourse to a neutral mind, the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* refers to the "momentary mind" to express the originally pure mind.

5.3.3. NON-EMPTINESS AND THE SEED NATURE

The *Śrīmālā Sūtra* establishes the theories of the "emptiness *tathāgatagarbha*" (Skt. *śūnya-tathāgata-garbha*; Chn. *kong rulaizang* 空如來藏) and the "non-emptiness *tathāgatagarbha*" (Skt. *aśūnya-tathāgata-garbha*; Chn. *bukong rulaizang* 不空如來藏). The *Ratnagotravibhāga* inherits these ideas. It argues that the emptiness theory espoused by the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*, though correct, is not definitive (*buliaoyi*) while the understanding of emptiness espoused by the *tathāgatagarbha* texts is definitive.

Yinshun explains how these two interpretations of emptiness differ. The *tathāgatagarbha* texts emphasize that the afflictions and conditioned dharmas—those phenomena that are created as the synthesis of causes and conditions and which arise, change, and perish—are adventitious to the original purity of the mind and are therefore empty of any kind of own-being. *The Great Dharma Drum Sūtra*, the *Yangjue Moluo Jing*, and the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, for example, all stress that conditioned things are empty (*youwei zhuxing shi kong* 有爲諸行是空). The *No Increase and No Decrease Sūtra* as well as the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* point out that the defilements are empty. From the perspective of "the emptiness *tathāgatagarbha* theory," one can argue that the *tathāgatagarbha* and the originally pure mind are empty if by emptiness what one intends is that the *tathāgatagarbha* lacks defilements and conditioned dharmas, which are themselves empty of permanent, unchanging existence. However, the *tathāgatagarbha* and the

originally pure mind that are separate from afflictions and conditioned existence are themselves not empty. Yinshun writes:

> Based on the emptiness *tathāgatagarbha* theory, one can say that the originally pure mind, Suchness, and the *dharmadhātu* are empty. But in fact [what this means] is that they are separate from defilements and conditioned things. Only the defilements and conditioned things are empty. Conditioned things are empty, but the essence of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the originally pure mind are not.[244]

The non-emptiness *tathāgatagarbha*, also known as the unsurpassed Buddha Dharma, has numberless inconceivable virtues (*gongde*) which are indistinguishable from it in that they exist just as it exists. These virtues, which essentially constitute the Buddha Nature and *tathāgatagarbha*, serve an important function: they allow the practitioner "to see the suffering of the world and to wish to be separated from it; to see the joy of *nirvāṇa* and to wish to obtain it."[245] Yinshun argues that the purpose of the non-emptiness Buddha Nature is practical and therefore expedient. It helps to arouse in the practitioner the conviction that worldly affairs result in suffering and to awaken in them the desire to attain enlightenment.

As we have seen, both emptiness and non-emptiness apply to the *tathāgatagarbha*. To say that the *tathāgatagarbha* is empty is to say that it is free from defilements and conditioned dharmas. These two are both empty in the Mādhyamaka sense of emptiness, that is, they lack permanent existence and therefore adhere only adventitiously to the *tathāgatagarbha*. However, the *tathāgatagarbha* itself is non-empty.

[244]Ibid., 177.
[245] Ibid.

After the defilements have been eliminated, the *tathāgatagarbha* is revealed as true suchness. To say that conditioned things and the afflictions are empty allows proponents of *tathāgatagarbha* theory to avoid the extreme of eternalism. On the other hand, to claim that a permanent and unchanging "suchness" exists prevents them from espousing the extreme view of nihilism. Yinshun writes:

> Understanding that emptiness is emptiness is [understanding that emptiness] is separate from the extreme of increasing existence; understanding that non-emptiness is not empty is [understanding that non-emptiness] is separate from the extreme of diminishing non-existence . . . the view of emptiness and non-emptiness—that of no increase and no decrease—is very far from the two extremes of etemalism and non-existence.[246]

Here Yinshun suggests that the non-empty tathāgatagarbha is an expedient means used to overcome the erroneous veiw of nihilism. Understanding the concept in this way does not contradict his emphasis on emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth.

5.3.4. "TRANSFORMING THE BASE" (SKT. *ĀŚRAYAPARAVṚTTI*; CHN. *ZHUANYI* 轉依)

In addition to *zhuanyi*, the Chinese version of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* also translates *āśrayaparavṛtti* as *zhuanshen* (轉身), *zhuande* (轉得), or simply *zhuan* (轉).[247] The Chinese compound, *zhuanyi*, literally means "to transform the base." *Zhuan* means to "revolve" or "transform." *Yi* refers to that which something depends on (*yizhi* 依止).

[246]Ibid., 178-179.

Zhuanyi, then, indicates the process involved in transforming samsaric existence into *nirvāṇa* or transforming a sentient being into a tathāgata. Yinshun points out that early in the history of Buddhism the issue arose as to how the defiled nature of birth and death and the pure nature of *nirvāṇa* relate to each other. For example, it is commonly held that one must transform his/her life of suffering and attachment to the life of purity and happiness. Such an assumption implies that there exists a connection between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, for how could one go from one to the other if they were not somehow bound to each other? But what is this connection? The answer to this question is extremely important for it has implications for Buddhist praxis. Yinshun suggests that the concept of *zhuanyi* arose in part as an attempt to provide a solution for this problem.

Because both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* have the same underlying base or *yi*, transformation from *saṃsāra* or the deluded sentient being to *nirvāṇa* or a Buddha can take place. In *tathāgatagarbha* thought, the *tathāgatagarbha* is the foundation of both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. It has the function of converting the base of *saṃsāra* into the base of *nirvāṇa*. Having this function, it is known as the *tathāgatagarbha āśrayaparavṛtti* 如來藏轉依: "the *tathāgatagarbha* is the basis of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*. From *saṃsāra* it then transforms into *nirvāṇa*; that is to say, it is the *tathāgatagarbha āśrayaparavṛtti*—it transforms the foundation of *saṃsāra* into the foundation of *nirvāṇa*. The *tathāgatagarbha āśrayaparavṛtti*, then, transforms erroneous views and obstructing afflictions into the pure suchness of the *dharmadhātu*.

[247] For a very helpful study about *āśrayaparavṛtti* see Ronald Davidson "Buddhist Systems of Transformation: *Āśraya-Parivṛtti/-Parāvṛtti* Among the Yogācāra." (Berkeley: University of California, 1985).

The implication, here, is that all things, whether they be the passions, false views, erroneous thinking or the Buddha's excellent virtues, have as their foundation the *tathāgatagarbha.* Put in another way, all things, without exception, are indistinct from "suchness" of the *dharmadhātu*:

> The body takes desire (*tanyu* 貪欲) as its origin: desire takes false views (*xuwang* 虛妄) as its origin: false distinctions (*xuwang fenbie* 虛妄分別) take erroneous thinking (*diandaoxiang* 顛倒想) as their origin: erroneous thinking takes non-abiding (*wuzhu* 無住) as its origin; non-abiding is without an origin. From without an abiding origin it establishes all dharmas. This has the same meaning as samsara having the *tathāgatagarbha* as its base. All things are separate from "suchness" (*zhenru*); all things do not depart from the *dharmadhātu*.[248]

Here Yinshun argues that from non-abiding, a synonym for emptiness, all things have their origin. Again Yinshun's tendency to interpret the *tathāgatagarbha* in terms of emptiness appears. Though he recognizes that within *tathāgatagarbha* thought, the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to be without increase and decrease, constant and unchanging, and in essence pure, all attributes that suggest that the *tathāgatagarbha* has more substance than the doctrine of emptiness, espoused by such schools as the Mādhyamika, for example, would allow, he still argues that these descriptions of the *tathāgatagarbha* are merely expedient devices designed to encourage practice and prevent the arising of nihilistic views.

[248] Ibid., 181.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: YINSHUN'S HERMENEUTICS

In the previous chapters, beginning with the *tathāgatagarbha's* relationship to the concept of the "Original Purity of the Mind" and concluding with its treatment found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, I have discussed Yinshun's presentation of the development of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as it appears in his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*. I have indicated that Yinshun's agenda throughout his text is to demonstrate the doctrine of emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and to characterize the *tathāgatagarbha* as an expedient means. Some sentient beings are afraid of the idea that everything including the self is empty of permanent and independent existence. This fear causes them to doubt their capacity to gain insight into emptiness and thereby results in them becoming discouraged about their ability to practice the Buddhist path. According to Yinshun, the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine allays these fears by teaching that all beings possess the potential for achieving Buddhahood. In this concluding chapter, I will first review Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* by discussing the hermeneutical strategies he uses for examining texts and doctrines. Secondly, I will raise some important questions for further investigation that will build upon this study, which I see as a preliminary step in a larger project that will assess the significance of Yinshun's thought in the development of early to mid-twentieth century Chinese Buddhism as well as address important trends in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist movements.

6.1. OVERVIEW OF YINSHUN'S INTERPRETATION OF *TATHĀGATAGARBHA* DOCTRINE

That Yinshun interprets ultimate truth in terms of the doctrine of emptiness is not new to Buddhism. It was advanced in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and held by the proponents of Mādhyamika thought. But by the time of the Tang dynasty in China, an alternative interpretation of ultimate truth appeared in which *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine represented ultimate truth and emptiness was merely an expedient means. In this scenario, emptiness applied only to the hindrances and not to the *tathāgatagarbha* itself. That is to say, the defilements were held to be empty of any permanent and independent existence and therefore were merely adventitious to the *tathāgatagarbha*, which was believed to be pure, permanent, blissful, and in possession of a self. The goal of practice based on this interpretation was to eliminate these defilements in order to uncover the *tathāgatagarbha*. Subsequent to the Tang dynasty, this view of Buddhist truth became the dominant paradigm for Chinese Buddhism and governed the interpretation of much of Buddhist doctrine. Regarding it as problematic, Yinshun in his work attempts to re-establish emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and to relegate the *tathāgatagarbha* to the status of an expedient means. Nowhere else do we see evidence for this effort more clearly than in his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*. To demonstrate this, I will discuss Yinshun's hermeneutical strategies as they pertain to his interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* found in this text. These strategies include his principle of employing the Buddha Dharma to study the Buddha Dharma, his focus on Indian sources for studying the development of doctrinal concepts, his use of the doctrine of expedient

means, and his implementation of the distinction between definitive and non-definitive texts.

In his article entitled, "Using the Buddha Dharma to Study the Buddha Dharma," Yinshun explains his method for the study of Buddhism, which he bases on the "Three Dharma Seals of Dependent Origination" (*yuanqi de san fayin* 緣起的三法印).[249] These include:

1. "All things are impermanent" (*zhuxing wuchang xing* 諸行無常性).
2. "All things lack inherent existence" (*zhufa wuwo xing* 諸法無我性).
3. "Nirvana is perfect quiescence" (*niepan jijing xing* 涅槃寂靜性).

1. "All things are impermanent"

Yinshun stresses the principle of impermanence for the study of Buddhism to remind students that the Buddha Dharma evolves unceasingly. Though the Dharma from the perspective of the ultimate abides always in the world as the Dharma Nature, conventional language or rational discourse utilized in the philosophical systems of various Buddhist schools constantly changes, declining or evolving into new forms over time or when encountering new cultures.[250] Because the language utilized by these systems functions within the context of the mundane realm, it should come as no surprise that it is subject to the same principle that governs all of conventional existence, namely, incessant change.[251]

[249] Yinshun, *Yi Fofa Yanjiu Fofa*, 1-14.
[250] Ibid., 7.
[251] Ibid., 3-4.

Emphasizing the dharma seal of impermanence allows Yinshun to validate older forms of Buddhism by suggesting that they were necessary not only in the context of the specific time and place that they arose, but also for the development of later forms of Buddhism. Yinshun argues that when these older forms decline, they generate new schools of thought. Therefore, scholars must study carefully the causes and conditions that contribute to the deterioration of a particular school in order to fully comprehend the way in which Buddhism transforms through history. Moreover, according to Yinshun, elucidating the arising and extinction of Buddhist sects in this way reveals another tenet that operates concomitant with impermanence—dependent origination. Yinshun writes:

> Since extinction [is a form of] dependent origination (*mie shi yuanqi* 滅是緣起), it inevitably will influence the future, becoming the causes and conditions for the arising and extinction of later thought [-schemes] and systems...the facts of history within the development and change of dependent origination will from beginning to end intimately influence the future.[252]

Studying the Buddha Dharma from a historical perspective based on the principle of impermanence acts as a means to verify the process of dependent origination, illustrating the way the conventional present and future has been shaped by previous causes and conditions.

Not only does the principle of impermanence validate the importance of former schools of thought, but it also justifies the perspectives and teachings of new ones. Because the Buddha Dharma constantly evolves, one must view continued efforts to formulate the Buddhist teachings as attempts to re-discover the true meaning of the

[252] Ibid., 6-7.

Dharma for new historical and cultural circumstances. One must not regard new schools of Buddhism as inferior to previous schools. In fact, Yinshun directly condemns the argument which insists that Theravādin Buddhism represents the true teachings of the Buddha because of its similarity to the teachings of the historical Buddha:

> Some people...sympathize with the Buddhism of the Buddha's era (*foshi de fojiao* 佛世的佛教). Therefore, they advocate the Buddhism of Thailand and Srilanka while criticizing other [forms]. This way of thinking...fails to recognize the effort and achievements of later Buddhism's attempt to discover the true meaning of the Buddhist teachings.[253]

> To blindly advocate previous schools of thought or emphasize those of other cultures because their doctrines and practices closely resemble what Śākyamuni Buddha taught ignores the inevitability of change that occurs according to time and place and therefore results in what Yinshun calls "extremely foolish conclusions"(*ji yuzhuo de jielun* 極愚拙的結論).[254]

2. "All things lack inherent existence"

The principle of impermanence guides how one examines historical events while the theory that "all things lack inherent existence" (otherwise known as no-self) indicates the attitude one should have while doing research. Yinshun encourages scholars to eliminate their subjective preconceptions while studying the Buddha Dharma. Otherwise, they will not correctly comprehend the intended import of the *sūtras* and treatises. Strong bias exemplifies self-centeredness—the grasping ego asserting itself. In order to avoid this mistake, Yinshun insists that scholars put into practice the principle of no-self.

Yinshun, however, recognizes the impossibility of pure objectivity. He argues this point from a Buddhist perspective. According to the doctrine of dependent

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[253] Ibid. 7.

origination, subject and object, knower and the known mutually condition one another. Thus, the scholar cannot be completely objective for this would require an independent existence completely separate from the object of study. For such a condition to obtain, one would have to deny the validity of dependent origination—an act that would amount to asserting a permanent existence or a self:

> From the point of view of the Buddha Dharma, understanding is the perception and function of the mutual conditioning of the knower and the known (*nengzhi suozhi jian huxiang yuancheng* 能知所知間互相緣成). Fundamentally, there is no pure, objective understanding separate from our subjective point of view. Moreover, we still receive restrictions from past perfuming (*guoqu xunxi* 過去熏習).[255]

Nonetheless, by eliminating one's overtly biased views, one can minimize the ego and thereby arrive at the essential significance of the Buddhist teachings: "But if we can avoid deliberately holding biased views in advance, then at the time of forming understanding, we can draw nearer to the fundamental meaning of the *sūtras* and treatises."[256]

3. "*Nirvāṇa* is perfect quiescence"

Here, Yinshun argues that scholarship practiced with the first two seals in mind can be a vehicle to liberation. The principles of impermanence, dependent origination, and no-self indicate the emptiness of language and conceptual thought. Thus, when these tenets are applied to the study of the Buddha Dharma, they can result in a direct experience of quiescence. Yinshun writes:

[254] Ibid.

> Whoever studies the Buddha Dharma should not only experience with their own mind the true meaning represented by words, but should also understand the impermanence and no-self of letters and words, so that they can directly from words and letters experience quiescence. Since ancient times many of great virtue studied a *sūtra* or heard a *gātha* and then freely (without restriction) entered into enlightenment.[257]

Yinshun justifies the view that proper study of the *sūtras* and treatises grounded on the understanding that words and letters are empty of permanent existence is a legitimate means for attaining enlightenment:

> "The nature of words and letters being empty is the characteristic of liberation." If one is able to thoroughly and deeply understand this view, then with much learning and correct thinking, when the time is ripe, he/she will directly enter into it without difficulty. Researching words and letters is not necessarily shallow study. It all depends on how the researcher does his research and applies his mind.[258]

For Yinshun, study has soteriological value not merely as an adjunct to meditation and ritual, but as a primary means for attaining liberation. Just as one would apply the doctrines of no-self and impermanence to an analysis of the decomposition of a corpse as a form of analytical meditation, one can likewise adopt these views for the investigation of the Buddha Dharma when studying Buddhist texts. Utilizing the Buddha's teachings of impermanence, no-self, and dependent origination to study the Buddha Dharma elucidated in the *sūtras* and treatises allows the researcher not only to obtain a more thorough understanding of the text or teaching in question, but also to experience transforming insight into the true nature of reality. In other words, on the basis of this interpretive strategy, one can realize that all things, including the various historical and

[255] Ibid., 8.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid., 12.

cultural manifestations of the Buddha Dharma, lack independent and unchanging existence. Therefore, Buddhist texts both reflect the teachings of impermanence, no-self, dependent origination, and emptiness—what Yinshun would consider to be the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism—and are subject to them. By means of this two-fold process, Buddhist texts reveal the Buddha Dharma.

From his use of the first seal, we see that one of the most significant features of Yinshun's hermeneutics is the emphasis he places on understanding how doctrines develop over time. He traces the formation of a concept from its beginnings, taking into consideration the historical circumstances as well as the various doctrinal developments that have influenced its evolution. In his opinion, doctrines and texts arise in accordance with the characteristics of particular cultures, historical periods, and individual people: "the Buddha's teachings and the discourses of bodhisattvas and patriarchs vary according to the people's different capacities and preferences at different times and places."[259] As I have shown in Chapter Two, Yinshun begins his discussion of the evolution of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine in *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha* with an explanation of the "Original Purity of the Mind," a central doctrinal focus of Nikāya Buddhism. He suggests that the concept derives from *samādhi* cultivation and then is developed by various sects of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism such as the Mahāsaṃghika, the Vibhajyavādins, and the Sarvāstivādins. These schools developed their positions based on the doctrinal issues that were most important to them. So for example the Mahāsaṃghika were concerned with the relationship between the Pure Mind and the wholesome and

[258] Ibid., 12-13.

unwholesome characteristics, while the Vibhajyavādins were concerned about whether or not the mind remained in essence pure even before the afflictions were eliminated. In the Mahāyāna the "Original Purity of the Mind" evolved differently. For example, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* interpreted it in terms of emptiness and thereby equated it with another important doctrine known as "No Mind." The concept played very distinctive roles according to whether it developed in the context of sectarian Buddhism or Mahāyāna Buddhism. The point here is that Buddhist doctrines develop in different ways based on the social, cultural, and, in this case, religious circumstances and needs of a particular group in a particular time.

Therefore, that the Chinese emphasized and expanded upon certain doctrines does not trouble Yinshun at all. In fact, he perceived such a progression as a perfectly natural consequence of the Buddhist notion of "expedient means" (Skt. *upāya*; Chn. *fangbian* 方便). According to this doctrine, the Buddha based what he taught his disciples on their relative level of spiritual maturity and their capacity to understand his teachings because only the most exceptional practitioners could comprehend the Truth in its fullest expression. Since the vast majority could not, the Buddha instead taught them provisional truths based on conventional understanding. These teachings were not, in the end, true, but they nonetheless prepared the minds of his disciples for the revelation of ultimate Truth. In this respect, Yinshun suggests that new texts and doctrines appearing in contexts outside of India were created to address the spiritual needs of practitioners in those settings. Thus, for instance, the discovery that the *Awakening of Faith* is an

[259] Ibid.

apocryphal text written in China does not detract from the validity of its teachings.[260] On the contrary, the fact that the text became so central to Chinese Buddhism indicates that the doctrines it espoused such as those related to Buddha Nature theory had an affinity with the spiritual needs of the Chinese people. The explanation that expedient means functions according to the circumstances of certain times and places is an innovation that we can attribute to Yinshun. We can refer to this idea as a type of "historical relativism" by which historical events, in this case doctrinal interpretations, are valued for their relevance to a particular culture and historical period.

Yinshun also employs another interpretive strategy closely related to *upāya* that has played an important role in the commentary tradition in both Theravādin and Mahāyāna Buddhism: the distinction between definitive (*nītārtha*) teachings on the one hand and non-definitive (*neyārtha*), intentional teachings on the other. Definitive teachings and texts of the Buddha are those that do not require further interpretation. They express the ultimate truth precisely. Non-definitive teachings are those that require further interpretation. Though they have ultimate truth as their foundation, they do not express it explicitly. Such teachings are considered intentional because they result from the Buddha's tendency to use imprecise doctrines for instructing his followers in order to help them overcome certain problems that interfere with their attainment of

[260] However, it is telling that Yinshun, in his discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha* in his work, *The Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, does not mention the *Awakening of Faith*. In fact, he does not discuss any apocryphal texts in his examination of *tathāgatagarbha* theory. This fact supports the view that Yinshun holds Indian texts to be superior to Chinese texts despite his validation of apocryphal sources as expedient devices.

enlightenment.[261] The utilization of the *tathāgatagarbha* to assuage people's fears about emptiness serves as an example.

In Yinshun's opinion, only *śūnyatā* corresponds to the definitive and ultimate meaning of the Buddha's teachings, while the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is intentional, needing further interpretation and explanation. Thus, Yinshun focuses on the soteriological significance of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as a means for liberating beings incapable of understanding the doctrine of emptiness as taught in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and Mādhyamika treatises.[262] He does not accept the *tathāgatagarbha* as the ontological basis of entities, but instead stresses its practical function as a step along the path that some must work through in order to arrive at knowledge of the true nature of existence—namely, emptiness.

As for the development of specific teachings, Yinshun places considerable emphasis on the origins of a concept. Therefore, using sophisticated philological and exegetical methods, he frequently begins his study of an idea with texts known to have their genesis in India, often seeking its antecedents in the *Āgamas* and then tracing its development through early Indian Mahāyāna texts. As an example we can again turn to Yinshun's treatment of the "Original Purity of the Mind." Yinshun begins by analyzing this concept as it is found in the *Āgamas* and developed in the literature of the pre-Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism. He then traces the development of this teaching through Mahāyāna texts such as the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*.[263]He indicates that the "Original

[261] Ruegg, *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism*, 33.
[262] Yinshun explains the *śūnyatā*, *ālayavijñāna*, and the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrines as soteriological devices in his pill of immortality analogy. See Yinshun, *The Way to Buddhahood*, 326.
[263] Again see Chapter Two of this dissertation and Chapter Three of Yinshun's text.

Purity of the Mind" is not the same as the *tathāgatagarbha*, but is nonetheless a concept central to its evolution.

Even when he addresses specific mention of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory, he analyzes Indian texts beginning with early presentations of the concept as it appears in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and various Yogācāra texts and concluding with its development in the *Laṇkāvatāra* and *Nirvāṇa Sūtras*. Though Yinshun wishes to validate innovations in doctrine that occur in different times and cultures and discourages the view that Theravāda Buddhism represents the true teachings of the Buddha, he continually returns to the teachings of the Mādhaymika school and its proponents to justify his emphasis on the doctrine of emptiness. For Yinshun, one must turn to the Indian sources, especially the pre- and early Mahāyāna texts, to find the most unadulterated interpretations of Buddhist truth. This practice of analyzing Indian Buddhist texts for the purpose of re-discovering the true teachings of the Buddha is known in Chinese as "turning back to the original sources" (回溯原典 *huisu yuandian*). Focusing on such sources was by no means practiced only by Yinshun and in fact was championed by one of Yinshun's contemporaries, namely Ouyang Jingwu. Ouyang specifically used rigorous philological analysis to determine the authenticity of texts. Unlike Yinshun, however, if he discovered that a particular work purporting to originate in India actually was created in China, he wholly rejected it and all the doctrines and schools that derived from it. Therefore, in his efforts to determine the true teachings of the Buddha, he turned completely to the study of Indian sources which for him consisted in examining the *Āgamas*, *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, Mādhyamika literature, Vinaya,

Buddhist logic and Yogācāra doctrine. Ouyang championed this method of study borrowed from the research methodology typical for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in both Europe and North America because he believed it served as a highly rational form of textual analysis devoid of the moral and religious didacticism of traditional Chinese scholarship. The goals of this methodology

> aimed to rescue texts from conditions of misunderstanding and reveal their objective meaning for the first time by applying the critical methods of "scientific history" which could disclose the intentions of their author.[264]

In this methodology, the only way to find the Buddha's true intentions is to examine the texts and doctrines thought to have originated during the period closest to when the Buddha lived. The assumption is that the nearer one gets temporally to the Buddha by way of the text, the more likely one will find more accurate and thus more true representations of his teachings. By looking to Indian presentations of Buddhist doctrine, Chinese scholars sought to peel away the layers of Chinese Buddhist influence to get beyond the Chinese "corruption" of Buddhist ideas.

Ouyang's so-called "rational" form of textual analysis is founded on the principle that one can attain an accurate understanding of the "true" meaning of a classical text as long as the appropriate philological and exegetical methodologies are utilized. Because scholars like Ouyang considered these methods to be systematic and therefore rational approaches to the study of text-based materials, they regarded them as the ideal tools for manifesting objective and factual explanations of classical texts and doctrines. For

[264] Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravāda Buddhism," in *Curators of the Buddha: the Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 36.

example, during the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries in East Asia (China and Japan) as well as in Europe and the United States, good exegetical and philological methodology served efforts to uncover original sources and thereby access the original meanings of (or the truth in) texts.[265]

Of course, much has been said among literary critics and others about the impossibility of the researcher providing an impartial interpretation of a text or historical event because one can never completely eliminate one's own bias. As we have seen in his discussion of the role that the second seal plays in his hermeneutics, Yinshun is fully aware of this fact. However, in his presentation of the second seal he does encourage the student of Buddhism to eliminate overtly prejudiced views in order to "draw nearer to the fundamental meaning of the *sūtras* and treatises."[266] Thus, despite his recognition of the difficulty of obtaining a purely objective state of mind, he does believe that in order to access the truth espoused by Buddhist texts one should become as objective as possible. To serve the goal of objectivity, Yinshun utilizes exegesis and philology in order to compare the meaning of terms found in a variety of texts and to trace the evolution of a particular concept. He utilizes this practice in his examination of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine.

For example, in his discussion of Paramārtha's theory of the *tathāgatagarbha* found in Chapter Seven of his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*, Yinshun explains the meaning of "*garbha*" (Chn. *zang*). He discusses the treatment of this term in the "Manifesting the Essence Chapter" of the *Buddha Nature Treatise* (*foxinglun* 佛性論)

[265] See Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravāda Buddhism," 31-61. Here Hallisey

and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.[267] According to Yinshun, the former lists three meanings for *garbha* which include:

1. *Dharmakāya*
2. Suchness
3. Buddha Nature

The Chinese translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, on the other hand, has five different meanings for *garbha*. The following is a list of these meanings and Yinshun's explanations of them:

1. *tathāgatagarbha*
Here, *garbha* means "definitive nature" (or "essential nature"). All dharmas take no-self as their nature, which is the *tathatā* nature. Sentient beings are not separate from the non-discriminative nature of the *tathatā*.

2. *dharmadhātugarbha*
Here, *garbha* is the causal meaning. All unsullied dharmas of the sage are conditioned by the *dharmadhātu*, and thereby arise.

3. *dharmakāyagarbha*
Here, *garbha* means "arising"and "production." That which all the sages attain is the *dharmakāya*. Because of joyful faith in the *dhātu* nature, they then obtain perfection.

4. *lokottaragarbha*
Here *garbha* refers to the trans-mundane dharma and thus does not resemble the mundane dharma.

5. *prakṛtipariśuddhi tathāgatagarbha*
Here, *garbha* means extremely deep and mysterious. Suchness corresponds with the *tathātadhātu*. The intrinsic nature becomes good and pure.

Here we see Yinshun using philology to explicate the significance of the word *garbha* in two different texts. This allows him to provide a more nuanced interpretation

discusses Rhys Davids attempt to write an "historic," (that is true) account of the Buddha's life.

of *garbha* that will in the end elucidate the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Moreover, Yinshun focuses on two texts purportedly written by Indian authors. Thus, even here he prefers to stick with Indian sources—or so-called "original sources"—when analyzing technical terminology.

The use of original sources is not unique to modern Buddhist intellectuals like Yinshun or Ouyang Jingwu. David Chappell in his article "Hermeneutical Phases in Chinese Buddhism" argues that religious innovation often appears as a means for resolving problems associated with a period of crisis. New doctrines and practices are authenticated within the context of the larger tradition by reference to classical scriptures and treatises. These texts are utilized to demonstrate that the doctrines and practices advocated are in fact not new at all, but rather had always existed as genuine teachings.[268]

Yinshun's work follows this pattern. His interpretation of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is his response to what he sees as a crisis in Chinese Buddhism, a crisis manifested clearly in contemporary Buddhist practices and beliefs. Yinshun maintains that an emphasis on emptiness and *tathāgatagarbha* as an expedient device will not only correct erroneous perceptions about Buddhist praxis, but more importantly will elucidate the nature of ultimate truth in Buddhism and thereby clarify for practitioners the goal of the Buddhist path. He supports his focus on *śūnyatā* by returning to the *sūtras* (specifically, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*) and the treatises (namely those of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism) that explicate this concept as the definitive expression

[266] See footnote 256.
[267] Yinshun, *Rulaizang*, 216-217.
[268] Chappell, "Hermeneutical Phases in Chinese Buddhism," in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1988), 176.

of Buddhist truth. Yinshun, then, justifies his interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* both by indicating precedence for his reading in classical Buddhist texts and through the use of traditional hermeneutical strategies namely *upāya* and the distinctions between definitive and non-definitive teachings.

Certainly for Yinshun, returning to original sources and utilizing classical hermeneutical strategies supports his doctrinal agenda. However, it does more than merely authenticate or justify his opinions. It also allows him to claim authority for his interpretations. Pointing out that his views of emptiness and the *tathāgatagarbha* were espoused in the original Indian sources has permitted Yinshun to assert that his understanding of these concepts is not only accurate, but also orthodox according to Indian Buddhist standards. He now can argue that his work serves to transmit the correct understanding of Buddhist truth and praxis to a time wherein the Buddha's message has become confused.

In summary, Yinshun's hermeneutics consist essentially of four parts: the notion of using the Buddha Dharma to study the Buddha Dharma, a return to Indian sources to study the development of doctrinal concepts, the use of the doctrine of expedient means, and the implementation of the distinction between definitive and non-definitive texts. By means of these interpretive strategies, we see Yinshun advancing his doctrinal agenda. For example, we have seen repeatedly Yinshun making the point that the *tathāgatagarbha* is an expedient device designed to help people overcome certain types of problems such as the fear of emptiness and that *tathāgatagarbha* texts are non-definitive and must ultimately be understood as having the doctrine of emptiness as their

basis. However, claiming that a teaching is an expedient device or that a *sūtra* is a non-definitive text not only justifies contradictions in Buddhist doctrine, but also establishes a dichotomy between those teachings that are expedient and therefore less representative of truth and those that directly express ultimate truth. *Upāya* and the distinction between definitive and non-definitive texts serve as tools for promoting one doctrine over another and in this way can be used to support one's doctrinal agenda. For Yinshun, emptiness is the definitive expression of ultimate truth. He labels any texts or teachings like the *tathāgatagarbha* theory that seem to contradict this view as expedient devices or non-definitive truths, a practice which has the effect of relegating such teachings to an inferior position compared to those that espouse emptiness. In other words, while validating the appearance of new doctrines and the transformation of old ones that appear in various times and places, he also evaluates them. He does not passively accept these new ideas, but categorizes them as expedient or ultimate expressions of Buddhist truth based on whether or not they express the doctrine of emptiness as definitive or non-definitive truth. Using these Buddhist hermeneutical strategies, then, Yinshun furthers his agenda of re-establishing the doctrine of emptiness as the definitive statement of Buddhist truth.

Yinshun's use of the three seals for studying the Buddha Dharma also advances his doctrinal agenda. As already mentioned, he utilizes the first seal—that all things lack permanence—to underscore how the Buddhist teachings change according to time and place. In so doing, he justifies differences in the development of doctrine and validates them on the basis of expedient means. However, claiming that the teachings are subject to change underscores the fact that emptiness governs Buddhist doctrine as well as

sentient existence. In other words, to say that teachings and texts change over time and in relation to cultural contexts is to demonstrate that they are empty of a permanent and unchanging existence. Likewise, to use the second seal, the teaching of no-self and dependent origination, to elucidate the scholar's relationship to his/her object of study again expresses that emptiness pertains to all aspects of conventional reality—not only to sentient beings and ideas, but also to the very relationship between them. Finally, in the Third Seal, when Yinshun argues that the Buddha Dharma as Dharma Nature remains constant despite changes in the conventional interpretations of the doctrines, he equates Dharma Nature, an expression for ultimate truth, with emptiness.

From the foregoing discussion, we see Yinshun continually asserting his agenda in his *A Study of the Tathāgatagarbha*. So driving is his desire to advance his agenda that he occasionally sacrifices careful scholarly analysis for questionable conclusions based on arbitrary assumptions. For example, to justify his view that the concept of the "Original Purity of the Mind" functions as non-definitive teaching of the Buddha, Yinshun utilizes a categorization of the four *Āgamas* based on the Four Points of View (the Four *Siddhāntas*). According to this schema, Yinshun classifies the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* within the third *siddhānta* known as the individual point of view. Teachings and texts that appear in this category are expedient devices designed to address the specific needs of individual practitioners. They do not directly represent ultimate truth, revealing the true nature of reality, but instead guide practitioners to a level of understanding that will prepare them to engage teachings that do reveal ultimate truth directly. Because the concept of the "Original Purity of the Mind" appears in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, and

thereby is classified according to the third *siddhānta*, Yinshun concludes that it is a non-definitive teaching that does not directly and completely express ultimate truth.

Considering his agenda, we can see that Yinshun's conclusions regarding the "Original Purity of the Mind" serve an important function. He can now contend that language suggestive of the permanence or essential existence of the original pure mind is at best an expedient device. Moreover, by connecting it with the Four *Siddhāntas*, he establishes this view not as one of his own creation, but rather one held by thinkers in early Buddhism. In so doing, he suggests that his understanding of the Pure Mind was the original intent of the doctrine. Therefore, he appeals to the "authority of original sources" to assert his interpretation. The problem with this interpretation, however, begins with Yinshun's classification of the *Āgamas*. He provides no justification for the way he determines what texts belong in which *siddhānta*. Thus, his placement of these texts into the various *siddhānta* categories is arbitrary. He simply decides which of the *Āgamas* go where and then makes assumptions based on these decisions. The conclusions that Yinshun asserts about the original purity of the mind on the basis of the *siddhānta*s, then, cannot be adequately justified. He advances these conclusions to serve his overall agenda of establishing emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth.

6.2. WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Now that Yinshun's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* and its relationship to the doctrine of emptiness has been established, we can raise some important questions that can be addressed in future studies. Perhaps one of the most fundamental issues for understanding the development of Yinshun's thought and hermeneutics is the relationship of his ideas to the political, social, and religious milieu of the early to mid-twentieth century. Yinshun's emphasis on the importance of "returning to the Indian sources," maintaining objectivity, and transmitting the true and correct interpretations of Buddhist doctrine and texts are important intellectual trends not only for Yinshun, but also for other Buddhist and secular intellectuals and reformers during this time. For example, we have already seen that Ouyang Jingwu placed great significance on Indian sources as a means for determining the essence of Buddhism. Moreover, the pursuit of objective truth through rational investigation served the goals of secular thinkers like Yan Fu and later Hu Shi. These men were influenced by Western philosophical ideologies that espoused rational and objective inquiry in the service of modernization.

Hu Shi, for instance, espoused the philosophy of Pragmatism developed by the late nineteenth-early twentieth century American philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) as the most effective means for carrying out China's modernization. Believing that reform at the level of ideas must occur before one can alter social and cultural values and institutions, Hu Shi sought to replace the traditional Chinese ideological structure with perhaps the most essential premise of Dewey's Pragmatism: scientific analysis.[269]

[269] Greider, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*, 47.

Hu Shi felt that once the Chinese adopted Pragmatism, it would provide them with the intellectual tools necessary for discovering realistic solutions for China's problems. He believed that scientific methodology could function as an antidote to Chinese superstitious attitudes founded on Buddhist beliefs and practices that permeated all levels of society. These "out-moded" and "backward" ways of thinking prevented China from taking practical steps to modernize, causing it to remain in a position of inferiority compared to Western nations and Japan.

This emphasis on objective truth, scientific inquiry, and pragmatism has its foundation on a much more fundamental principle: reason. Reason here refers to the practice of thinking logically or systematically, drawing inferences or conclusions from known or assumed facts. Those who championed it argued that reason serves to promote knowledge, remove prejudice, and determine truths about the world and human existence. Therefore, they believed that it had an important role to play in the elimination of "superstitious" beliefs and practices.

Yinshun believes that the Buddhist teachings properly understood are based entirely on reason. In the preface to his book *The Way to Buddhahood: Instructions from a Modern Chinese Master* (*Cheng Fo Zhi Dao*: 成佛之道), he writes: "Buddhism is a religion of reason and not just a religion of faith. In explaining principles or instructing practices, Buddhist teachings rely on reason. These teachings are both rich and correct."[270] Yinshun formulated much of his thought during a time when many intellectuals advocated reason as a means for rooting out "superstitious views" characteristic of

[270] Yinshun, *The Way to Buddhahood*, IX.

indigenous philosophical and religious traditions. A number of men from within the tradition, both clerics and laity, believed that Chinese Buddhism needed serious reform. They agreed that the Buddhism of their day encouraged dependence on spirits and magic, espoused unorthodox doctrines, and engaged in methods of public deception.[271] For instance, because it fostered superstitious beliefs about ghosts among the people and encouraged greed as it became the primary source of income for many monasteries, these reformers often railed against the performance of funeral rituals for the deceased, a common practice across China at this time.[272] Such activities, they believed, undermined Buddhism as an effective means for spiritual transformation. Therefore, they took it upon themselves to explicate the "real" and "true" forms of doctrine and practice in order to facilitate people's attainment of Buddhist soteriological goals. Many of them were influenced by the ideological and philosophical emphasis on reason and Dewey-style Pragmatism common in China during the early to mid-twentieth century. Thus, they tended to focus their attentions on "this world," choosing to de-emphasize, for example, concerns with birth in Pure Lands, rebirth into other realms, or the "supernatural" effects of rituals. These thinkers often advocated a "new" Buddhism which would emphasize the

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[271] Welch, *Buddhist Revival in China*, 204.

[272] In his book, *Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900-1950*, Holmes Welch indicates that some monasteries purposely cheated their patrons by telling them, for example, that the monks in the great shrine-hall were reciting a penance for only their specific needs—a service for which each patron believed he/she was paying. In fact, however, the monks were reciting for a number of different people at the same time, telling each the same lie. In this way, they made two or three times the money in a fraction of the time they would have spent actually chanting for each patron.

Similarly, some monks, known as "monks on call" (*yingfu seng* 應赴僧), made their living by traveling outside of the monastery to people's homes in order to perform funeral rites. The vast majority of these monks were uneducated and therefore, ignorant of Buddhist texts and doctrine—an issue that did not bother the common person in need of their services, but one that, in the minds of progressive monks during the early twentieth century, underscored the need to reform Chinese Buddhist institutions. See Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 197-202.

human sphere since only there could effective changes be made to improve the spiritual, social, and cultural conditions of Chinese society. Whatever the means, these Buddhist reformers all shared the desire to establish a more humanistic form of Buddhism.

When examining Yinshun's thought, we can inquire about the extent to which Yinshun's emphasis on "returning to Indian sources," objective analysis of texts by means of philological and exegetical methodologies, and reason is due to influences from early to mid-twentieth century religious, intellectual, and political ideology. Moreover, we must ask in what ways, if any, is Yinshun's thought a reflection of the efforts among intellectuals to find solutions for the problem of modernization in China as well as whether or not we can characterize Yinshun's thought as contributing to a "modernization of Buddhism." I believe that answers to these questions will not only provide insight into Yinshun's thought and its relationship to the events of the twentieth century, but will also elucidate the reasons why Yinshun asserts emptiness as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth and relegates the *tathāgatagarbha* to the category of expedient means.

However, while asking these questions, we must be careful not to assume that Yinshun's thought is merely a product of his time. He often responded to issues of doctrinal reform differently than his Buddhist counterparts. For example, we have seen that as part of his hermeneutical endeavor Yinshun re-established the doctrine of emptiness as definitive truth. However, this emphasis on emptiness is unique among Buddhist reformers of the period. Many like Ouyang Jingwu and even Taixu turned to Yogācāra teachings for inspiration. We must determine, therefore, the degree to which

Yinshun's advocacy of emptiness was related to the concerns of the twentieth century and how much it was related to his own personal reading and understanding of the Buddhist canon. Connected to this issue is the more specific question of how Yinshun understands his efforts to reform Buddhist doctrine. In other words, does Yinshun see himself as advocating innovative interpretations of Buddhist doctrine or does he see himself as simply re-asserting Buddhist tradition?

Another issue that requires further explanation is the relationship between Yinshun's views of the Pure Land and his intepretation of the *tathāgatagarbha.* Yinshun attributes the degeneration of Chinese Buddhism, which he sees as evident in the early to mid-twentieth century, to the view that regards *tathāgatagarbha* thought as the definitive expression of Buddhist truth. According to Yinshun, such a view can result in the hypostatization of the *tathāgatagarbha.* That is, it can lead to the perception that the *tathāgatagarbha* is the ultimate ground of existence. For Yinshun, this view is misguided for two reasons: first, it causes believers to disregard those practices that can help them attain enlightenment and second, it allows people to ignore what is happening in the world around them, resulting in an unwillingness to take responsibility for improving society. As an example, Yinshun points to Pure Land belief and practice common during the early twentieth century. He criticizes the conviction held by Pure Land adherents that chanting Amitābha Buddha's name repeatedly will gain them rebirth in the Western Paradise. Yinshun disapproves of this practice because it supports the erroneous notions that Amitābha exists as a kind of omnipotent, everlasting god and that the Western

Paradise is a heaven wherein believers will blissfully reside for eternity.[273] Moreover, such notions cause practitioners to focus all of their attention and effort on attaining entrance to the Pure Land instead of engaging in practices that will result in their liberation from suffering. In other words, practitioners who hold these views mistakenly regard rebirth in the Pure Land as the goal of Buddhist practice. For Yinshun, belief in Amitābha's saving grace and the efficacy of chanting his name is at most an expedient means designed to help beginners have faith in the Buddhist teachings and to aid those who lack sufficient intellectual capacity to understand the deeper intentions of Buddhist doctrine:

> If, therefore, one is timid and finds it difficult to practice the bodhisattva-way...then chanting Amitābha Buddha is most secure! It is a wonderfully skillful means that can best embrace and protect those sentient beings who are beginners so that they do not lose their faith.[274]

In my opinion, if we look carefully we will ascertain that within his critique of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine and Pure Land practice he suggests a correlation between the traditional Chinese Buddhist interpretation of *tathāgatagarbha* thought as definitive truth and the erroneous views held by Pure Land practitioners in the early to mid-twentieth century.[275] In earlier periods an antagonistic relationship existed between these two

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[273] Yinshun makes clear his disapproval of religions that emphasis belief in an omniscient deity and transcendent heavens in his critique of Christianity. See Yinshun, *The Way to Buddhahood*, 325. For his treatment this issue within the context of Pure Land Buddhism, see Yinshun, *Jingtu yu Chan*, 29.
[274] Yinshun, *Way to Buddhahood*, 249. Also see Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 131.
[275] Noting the ease with which theistic religions and philosophies can interpret the tathāgatagarbha theory in support of their belief in a God and a soul, Yinshun writes:

> Recently, the Christian journal Jing Feng said that Buddha nature (Tathāgatagarbha) is similar to the notions of God and the soul. Of course, non-Buddhists will use this

schools of thought: the Pure Land adherents insisted on the importance of rebirth in a transcendent Pure Land, while proponents of *tathāgatagarbha* thought emphasized the importance of the "here and now" of this world. If Yinshun sees *tathāgatagarbha* thought as supporting Pure Land belief and practice in the early to mid-twentieth century, then he would be advocating a different understanding of this relationship then what pertained in earlier periods. The nature of the correlation, if one does indeed exist, between Pure Land belief and practice and *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine in Yinshun's thought must be explored further. Likewise, the significance of the difference between Yinshun's view of the relationship and that of thinkers in other periods requires examination.

Among his most influential ideas, the ones that have shaped the course of contemporary Chinese Buddhism, is his concept of "Buddhism in the human realm." Yinshun developed this concept as a reaction to the emphasis in early twentieth century Chinese Buddhism on rebirth in the Pure Land. Simply put, Yinshun's "Buddhism in the human realm" draws attention to human beings living in this world and emphasizes the need for them to cultivate practices that will effect their enlightenment. It has given rise to the idea in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism known as "founding the Pure Land among humanity" (*renjian jingtu* 人間淨土) which advocates establishing a Pure Land here in this world, a Pure Land in which one not only can cultivate enlightenment, but also can establish a just society and a clean environment.

similarity to lure Buddhist disciples, and against this we should be vigilant; nevertheless, this is a result of the similarity of such forms. Yinshun, *Way to Buddhahood*, 249.

Yinshun suggests here that hypostatizing the *tathāgatagarbha* can lead to a belief in a transcendent God, the view about Amitābha that he attributes to Pure Land believers in the early twentieth century. See also Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 129.

On the basis of this teaching, Yinshun attempts to make Buddhist practice and doctrine more practical and concrete. He discourages discussion of the transcendent or the "other-worldly" and instead focuses on what can be seen, heard, and touched in the here and now. In short, he advocates a "this worldly" approach to Buddhism. I believe that the concepts "Buddhism in the human realm" and "founding the Pure Land among humanity" have their ideological foundation in Yinshun's critique of *tathāgatagarbha* thought and his emphasis on the doctrine of emptiness. More work is needed to fully explicate this assumption. However, if I am correct, we will have discovered an important key for understanding the connection between Yinshun's doctrinal reform and his positions on the reform of Buddhist practice and institutions.

Associated with this issue is the question of the relationship between Yinshun's thought and the focus on social activism found in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist movements. Perhaps the most significant example of a movement influenced by Yinshun's thought is the charitable organization known as the Buddhist Association for the Merit of Overcoming Difficulties and Compassionate Relief (Fojiao Kenan Ciji Gongde Hui 佛教克難慈濟功德會) founded by Master Zhengyan 證嚴法師, one of Yinshun's tonsure disciples.

Zhengyan has consciously adopted the concepts "Buddhism in the human realm" and "founding a Pure Land in the human realm" as the ideological basis for her teachings.[276] She utilizes Yinshun's focus on the human realm to support a view of

[276] Ibid., 205.

Buddhism that amplifies the importance of making Buddhism more accessible to the laity, improving the social welfare of humanity, and creating a Pure Land in "this world:"

> We hope that the world will be a Pure Land of peace and joy. However, only by purifying human hearts, eliminating avarice and hostility, and activating the innate compassion in every person can we give of ourselves selflessly. Only by activating our conscience, revealing the intrinsic love hidden in our hearts, and planting the seeds of goodness can we change evil to good, calamity to good fortune.[277]

Zhengyan takes Yinshun's emphasis on "this world" a step further by advocating an interpretation of Buddhism that elevates the religious status of the laity. Monastic life is not a practical religious alternative for most people. Thus, with Zhengyan there is an attempt to reform Buddhism, making it meaningful for a larger population. Zhengyan shares with Yinshun the concern that continued emphasis on "other-worldly" issues will result in the demise of the Buddhist tradition. The tradition has to be made palatable and useful for the Chinese if it is to survive.

In order to make Buddhism more accessible to contemporary lay society, Zhengyan reinterprets traditional Buddhist teachings in terms of social work, prescribing new forms of Buddhist praxis accordingly. For example, she redefines the meaning of *daochang* 道場 the area of a temple in which one engages in religious practices such as meditation, to mean the workplace,[278] implying, of course, that the focus of one's spiritual cultivation should be on one's actions in the context of everyday life.[279] Furthermore, she argues that Buddhism is a path of practical action. One cannot obtain wisdom from studying the

[277] Venerable Shih Zhengyan, "A New Millenium of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth," in *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace*, ed. David W. Chappell (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 48.
[278] Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 214.

sūtras or by practicing meditation. She writes, "one does not have to listen to too many sermons. Merely using one's body to act out a simple verse of the sutras is the true dharma, the true root of virtue."[280] Finally, for Zhengyan giving is the highest form of religious praxis. Only through charity in the spirit of compassion can one obtain spiritual wisdom. She states, "To act like a buddha is to give without asking for anything in return and to cultivate one's speech and conduct for the sake of all living beings."[281] Charity is and has always been an important aspect of Buddhist practice. For example, we find it taught within the context of the "pure practices of the bodhisattva" otherwise known as the Six Perfections (which include charity, morality, forbearance, effort, meditation, and wisdom). But here charity is only one practice among six—all of which are important for self-cultivation. Zhengyan, fully aware of the traditional scheme, reinterprets all the other Perfections in terms of charity. For instance, meditative concentration, the Fifth Perfection, can be attained not only by sitting on a cushion, counting one's breath, but also by concentrating the mind on the person who is to benefit from one's altruism.[282] From the preceding examples, we see that Zhengyan advocates forms of Buddhist praxis that the laity can easily implement within the context of their everyday lives. Agreeing with traditional Chinese Buddhism, she believes that to effectively transform the world, self-cultivation must begin with the individual. However, she insists that it can take place right in the midst of the lay person's daily existence:

[279] Zhengyan, *Still Thoughts*. Vol 2 (Taipei: Still Thoughts Cultural Mission Co., Ltd., 1996) 159.
[280] Zhengyan, *Still Thoughts*. Vol. 1 (Taipei: Still Thoughts Cultural Mission Co., Ltd., 1996), 130.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan*, 214-215.

> Of course, we must start with ourselves. We must purify ourselves and promote happiness and harmony in our families. We can extend our care and concern to our community and society. When every society can live in harmony, then the whole world will be peaceful and free of disasters.[283]

Through her unique interpretations of doctrine and practice, she implies that neither sitting on a cushion in meditation nor chanting the Buddha's name in order to achieve rebirth in a transcendent pure realm produces any immediate and useful results that will improve social and economic conditions and meet the challenges faced by a modern Taiwan. Charity, on the other hand, does.

The connection between the movement's emphasis on charity and social and economic development has been recognized by important political figures in the R.O.C. government. The Winter 2000 issue of the Tzu Chi Quarterly, entitled "Tzu Chi: Buddhism in Action" records the Executive Branch Secretary General, Wei Chi-lin's speech celebrating the completed construction of the Tzu Chi Dalin General Hospital in Southern Taiwan's Chiayi County. He states:

> Tzu Chi has called on all Taiwanese to rediscover the driving force behind the development of this island throughout the years—love for the land and the people...As Taiwan continues to develop a pluralistic, forward-looking society, a stabilizing force is necessary. I believe Tzu Chi—an organization that transcends race, nationality, and politics—will be such a force.[284]

The R.O.C. government perceives the Tzu Chi movement as an organization which encourages and supports Taiwan's continued development as a modern nation. In so

[283] Zhengyan, "A New Millenium of Goodness," 48.

doing, it validates the present political system that has made Taiwan an economic power by advocating a form of religious praxis conducive to political, social, and economic progress.

Drawing on the theoretical framework delineated by Yinshun, Zhengyan re-conceptualizes traditional Buddhist praxis. On the one hand, she makes it accessible to the laity, and on the other hand, she undermines the perception that the Buddhist goal of enlightenment is attainable only through traditional forms of Buddhist practice. More research is necessary to delineate the specific connections between Yinshun's thought and Zhengyan's response to the political, social, and cultural circumstances in modern Taiwan as well as the more general question of how Yinshun's ideas have laid the foundation for the emphasis on social activism characteristic of contemporary Taiwanese Buddhist movements.

[284] Shu-fen Hung, "A Hospital of Great Love in a Little Town." *The Tzu Chi Quarterly* 7:4 (Winter 2000), 30-35.

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